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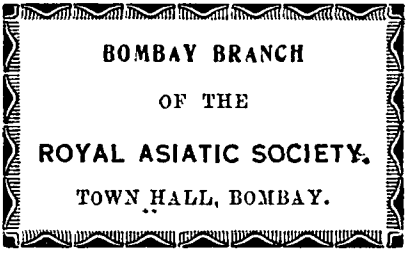

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GOSSIP

ABOUT

TTERS AND LETTER-WRITERS.

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FOR

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GOSSIP

ABOUT

LETTERS AND LETTER-WRITERS.

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BY

GEORGE SETON, ADVOCATE,
M.A. OXON.

H. C-24

EDINBURGH:
EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.
1870.

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PREFACE.

THE substance of the following pages was originally embraced in two Lectures which the author had the honour of delivering before the members of the Philosophical Institution, Edinburgh, in February 1867.

In the hope that his lucubrations may be considered not unworthy of publication, he has ventured to put them into their present shape, along with a large amount of additional matter.

ST. BENNET'S, EDINBURGH,
Christmas Day, 1869.

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'BLEST be the man! his memory at least,
Who found the art thus to unfold his breast;
And taught succeeding times an easy way
Their secret thoughts by *letters* to convey;
To baffle absence, and secure delight,
Which till that time was limited to sight.
The parting farewell spoke, the last adieu,
The lessening distance past, then loss of view,
The friend was gone which some kind moments gave,
And absence separated, like the grave.

When for a wife the youthful patriarch sent,
The camel, jewels, and the steward went,
And wealthy equipage, though grave and slow;
But not a line that might the lover show.
The ring and bracelets wooed her hands and arms,
But had she known of melting words and charms
That under secret seals in ambush lie
To catch the soul, when drawn into the eye!
The fair Assyrian had not took his guide,
Nor her soft heart in chains of pearl been tied.'

The Guardian, No. 172.

Letters and Letter-Writers.

IN ancient times, the practice of letter-writing, in our modern sense of the term, was altogether unknown. To say nothing of the scarcity and cumbrous character of the materials employed for writing, the state of society was such that 'correspondence' was not considered necessary. Formal, stately, and even elegant epistles were, no doubt, frequently indited—usually with the view of conveying instruction; but these old-world productions do not bear the remotest resemblance to that rapid, off-hand, genial effusion, the *letter* of later times.

Scriptural and Roman Letters.

In the Old Testament Scriptures we find occasional allusions to what are termed 'letters,'

of which the earliest occurs in the eleventh chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, where we have the following record of a letter written upwards of a thousand years before the birth of Christ :—'And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the fore-front of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.' Again, in the second chapter of Second Chronicles, reference is made to the written answer of Hiram, King of Tyre, to Solomon's message respecting the building of the Temple; and a few hundred years later, there are several interesting allusions to letters, and the mode of their despatch, in the Books of Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah.

In striking contrast to our modern and less dignified style of closing with the writer's signature, the Romans began their letters with a præloquium, or address, which embraced the name of the writer as well as that of the person to whom the letter was written.[1] Thus,

[1] 'Even the way in which a Roman begins his letter, heading it with his name at full length, is significant. Whereas we skulk with ours into a corner, and often pare it down to initials.' —*Guesses at Truth*, 1st series, p. 198.

'L. Catilina, Q. Catulo, S.;' that is, Lucius Catiline greets, or wishes health to, Quintus Catulus,—the letter 'S' being intended to indicate the words 'Salutem dicit.' When the person addressed happened to be an intimate friend, the epithets 'humanissimus,' 'optimus,' 'suavissimus,' and 'suus,' were frequently added. Sometimes the præloquium was conceived in the following terms:—'Si vales, gaudeo; ego valeo;' or, 'Si vales, bene est, ego valeo'—the initials of these words being often only given. The letter frequently ended with the word 'Vale,' 'Ave,' or 'Salve,' to which, in some instances, 'Mi anime' was added, as an expression of endearment. Unless previously communicated, the place where the letter was written was subjoined; and the date always expressed the day, frequently the year, and sometimes the hour. The Romans used no signature or subscription, except when writing to an emperor. There was rarely any address or inscription on the outside, the letter being usually intrusted to a letter-carrier (*tabellarius*), who was made acquainted with the person for whom it was intended. It was tied round with a string, of which the knot was

sealed ; and the seal usually consisted of a head of the writer, or of one of his ancestors, impressed on wax or chalk. In the twenty-third chapter of the Acts, we have an example of the Roman præloquium in the letter of the 'chief captain,' respecting the Jews' persecution of Paul : 'Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.' The apostolic epistles furnish other interesting examples. Thus, 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son : Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord.' Again : 'James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.' The place where the epistle was written, and the name of the person by whom it was sent, are also frequently indicated at the close, as in the case of Paul's epistle to Philemon, which bears to have been 'written from Rome to Philemon by Onesimus a servant.'

Characteristics of Male and Female Letter-Writers.

In the case of modern correspondence, I presume it will be universally admitted that, apart from other characteristics, the *sex* of a letter-writer may generally be inferred from the style. If the epistles of the 'Lords of Creation' are more precise and succinct than those of the gentler sex, there can be no doubt that they are quite eclipsed by the ladies in respect to graphic description and liveliness of touch. Of course, I do not refer to dry, matter-of-fact, *business* letters, on legal, commercial, or scientific subjects—to be afterwards noticed,—in the composition of which the male sex may reasonably be expected to be most successful; but to that light and airy effusion in the shape of the friendly epistle, with which we are all more or less familiar. Penned without premeditation, the inspiration of the moment—racy, fluent, and natural; here gay and joyous, there serious and grave, full of the most charming detail without being tedious, genial and good-humoured, if not clever and witty, and

overflowing with kindliness and affection,—the really good letter, which is usually the production of a woman's pen, is a positive sweetener of existence. A man, on the other hand, when compelled to indite an epistle without any special text, generally makes a very sorry appearance. In his desire to avoid prolixity, he becomes obscurely brief—

'Brevis esse laboro—Obscurus fio—'

every approach to gossip or sentiment is studiously avoided, and he produces a cold, bald, formal outline, without a vestige of either shade or colour; or if he should be disposed to attempt a more lengthened treatment, the result will probably bear an unpleasant resemblance to an essay, a sermon, or a review! In continual contact with the stern realities of life, and the unceasing cares of business, his time for friendly correspondence is, moreover, generally very limited, and he is too glad to allow his wife or his daughter to wield the pen on his behalf.[1]

[1] See some interesting criticism on a lady's letter-writing, at p. 96 of Lord Lindsay's recently published *Memoir of Lady Anna Mackenzie, Countess of Balcarres and Argyll.*

Crossing and Postscripts.

It must, however, be admitted that, in addition to certain other blemishes, ladies' letters frequently exhibit two highly objectionable features, in the shape of *Crossing* and *Postscripts*. Except, perhaps, in the case of a wife or lover —whose expression of affection is, of course, quite inexhaustible—the practice of crossing letters ought to be universally condemned—more especially in these days of cheap paper and postage; and when occasionally resorted to, a different coloured ink from that in the body of the letter ought invariably to be used. I believe there are many persons who entertain such a wholesome aversion to crossed letters that they frequently cast them aside without attempting a perusal of their contents.

In his *Weekly Register* for January 7, 1826, Cobbett beseeches a correspondent not to write 'across his writing,' which he pronounces to be a practice of *female* origin; and Byron, by the way, in his *Don Juan*, is not very complimentary to ladies' letters:—

> 'The earth has nothing like a she-epistle,
> And hardly heaven—*because it never ends.*

I love the mystery of a female missal,
Which, like a creed, ne'er says all it intends,
But full of cunning as Ulysses' whistle,
When he allured poor Dolon :—you had better
Take care what you reply to such a letter.'

The following brief effusion from a French lady to her husband may be given as a remarkable exception to the general rule. I do not, of course, venture to recommend it as a model to the affectionate wives of Great Britain and Ireland :—

'Je vous écris parceque je n'ai rien à faire ;
Je finis parceque je n'ai rien à dire.'

Postscripts, again, have been somewhat severely described as embracing the chief point of a lady's letter ; but be this as it may, it cannot be denied that they might generally be rendered unnecessary by the exercise of a very small amount of previous reflection.

I must candidly acknowledge, however, that the ladies are not the sole offenders in the matter of postscripts. I once met with an official letter, extending to about eight lines, from the pen of a learned Scottish lawyer, who held a distinguished place in the literary world. The writer's signature at the bottom of the first page was followed by the words, 'Turr over ;'

and on the other side appeared no fewer than *twelve* lines in the shape of a postscript, in which the opinion given in the letter itself was completely contradicted!

A striking illustration of the saying that the pith of a lady's letter is in the postscript, occurred in the case of a young lady, who, having gone out to India, and writing home to her friends, concluded with the following words:—'*P.S.*—You will see by my signature that I am married.'

The husband of a lady much given to the habit of postscribing, once laid a wager with her, on an occasion of his leaving home for a short time, that the first letter she wrote to him would not be without one of these codicils. Nothing seemed more certain than that the lady would win. The letter was written and signed, and about to be despatched, when she was tempted to add one line, forming the first postscript, 'You see I *have* written you a letter without a postscript.' This did not suffice, for there followed, as a *P.P.S.*, immediately afterwards:—'Who has won the wager—you or I?'

A certain class of peculiarly aggravating correspondents are not satisfied with a com-

bination of the two evils under consideration. In addition to a lengthy postscript and a page or two of crossing, they actually contrive to find occasion for a few more 'last words' on the flap of the envelope.

Altered Character of Correspondence.

In the present age of bustle and excitement, the tendency on the part of the male sex to abandon the practice of friendly letter-writing is probably on the increase, and it is to be feared that the more artificial condition of modern society will ultimately exercise an unfavourable influence on the character, as well as on the scope, of even female correspondence. If our grandfathers and grandmothers had fewer subjects to write about, they had more time to discuss them; and the comparative smoothness and simplicity of their lives is most agreeably reflected in their letters. It cannot be disputed, moreover, that the individuality and originality of character which constituted one of the most striking features of their more primitive times, is rarely to be encountered in these later days, when no ordinary mortal

ventures to exhibit the very smallest approach to idiosyncrasy, in deference to that inflexible standard of uniformity which the 'spirit of the age' is supposed to cherish.

The character of modern correspondence has, no doubt, been materially affected by the remarkable facilities for inter-communication afforded by our postal arrangements, as predicted by the son and biographer of Southey. In alluding to his father's later years, he says that with some of his friends his correspondence 'increased in frequency, and necessarily the interest of single letters diminished, as it was carried on by a multitude of *brief notes;* and this,' he adds, 'it seems likely will be so general a result of the new postage system, that in another generation there will be no correspondence to publish.'

Upwards of twenty years ago a writer in the *Quarterly Review* referred to another cause of the inferiority of modern letter-writing. 'It is not to be doubted,' he says, 'that the conversational power, as well as the graceful craft of letter-writing, for which the last century was famous, has waned. We believe that the result is partly attributable to the daily, nay

almost hourly, press, which in great measure supersedes the tongue of the talker and the pen of the ready writer. Its effect upon society in this respect is analogous to that of our stupendous machinery upon individual industry.'

Old English Letters.

The earliest English correspondence on record are the letters of the Paston family, relating to the reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV., and Richard III. (1422-85), and published by Sir John Fenn, a celebrated antiquary of the eighteenth century. The authenticity of these letters, which long formed a subject of controversy, has now been fully established by the recent elaborate investigations of the London Society of Antiquaries. Most of them were written by or to members of the family of Paston in Norfolk; and, accordingly, although they embrace frequent allusions to public affairs, their chief interest consists in their detailed and unvarnished description of the social and domestic manners of our English neighbours during the fifteenth century. 'The artless writers of these letters,' says Sir John Fenn,

'here communicate their private affairs, or relate the reports of the day; they tell their tale in the plain and uncouth phrase of the time; they aim not at shining by art or eloquence, and bespeak credit by total carelessness of correction and ornament.'

AGNES PASTON TO HER SON.

TO MY WELL-BELOVED SON, JOHN PASTON,—Son, I greet you well, and send you God's blessing and mine, and let you weet (*know*) that Robert Hill came homeward by Orwellbury, and Gurney telled him he had been at London for money, and could not speeden, and behested (*promised*) Robert that he should send me money by you; I pray forget it not as ye come homeward, and speak sadly (*seriously*) for another farmer. And as for tydings, Philip Berney is passed to God on Monday last past with the greatest pain that ever I saw man; and on Tuesday Sir John Heveningham yede (*went*) to his church and heard three masses, and came home again never merrier, and said to his wife that he would go say a little devotion in his garden, and then he would dine; and forthwith he felt a fainting in his leg, and syyd (*slid*) down; this was at nine of the clock, and he was dead ere noon.

My cousin Clere prays you that ye let no man see her letter, which is ensealed under my seal. I pray you that you will pay your brother William for four ounces and an half of silk as he paid, which he sent me by William Taverner, and bring with you a quarter of an ounce even like of the same that I send you closed in this letter; and say (*tell*) your brother William that his horse hath one

farcy and great running sores in his legs. God have you in keeping. Written at Norwich, on Saint Thomas' Even, in great haste, by your mother, AGNES PASTON.

NORWICH, *Friday, 6th of July* 1453.

JOHN PASTON TO EDMOND GREY, LORD OF HASTINGS, ETC.

THE LORD GREY,—Right worshipful and my right good Lord, I recommend me to your good Lordship, and whereas it pleased your Lordship to direct your letter to me for a marriage for my poor sister to a gentleman of your knowledge of 300 marks livelihood, in case she were not married; wherefore I am greatly bound to do your Lordship service; forsooth, my Lord, she is not married, nor insured to no man; there is and hath been divers times of late, communication of such marriages with divers gentlemen, not determined as yet, and whether the gentleman that your Lordship meaneth be one of them or nay, I doubt; and whereas your said letter specifieth that I should send you word whether I thought you should labour farther in the matter or nay. In that, my Lord, I dare not presume to write so to you without I knew the gentleman's name; notwithstanding, my Lord, I shall take upon me, with the advice of other of her friends, that she shall neither be married nor insured to no creature, nor farther proceed in no such matter, before the feast of the Assumption of our Lady next coming, during which time your Lordship may send me, if it please you, certain information of the said gentleman's name, and of the place and country where his livelihood lieth, and whether he hath any children; and after I shall demean me in the matter as your Lordship shall be pleased; for in good faith, my Lord, it were to me great joy that my said poor sister were, according to her poor

degree, married by your advice. Trusting, then, that ye would be her good lord, right worshipful and my right good Lord, I beseech Almighty God to have you in his keeping. Written at Norwich the 15th day of July.

NORWICH, *Monday, 15th of July* 1454.

Another early English collection of familiar letters is the correspondence of James Howell, who flourished during the first half of the seventeenth century. It affords abundant evidence of the ability and intelligence of the writer, and contains some very graphic descriptions of the historical events and personages of that eventful period. Towards the middle of the same century, we have a series of letters addressed by the Reverend George Garrard to Sir Thomas Wentworth, Lord Deputy of Ireland. They are to be found among a mass of public despatches in two bulky folios devoted to the life of Lord Strafford, and are described by Mr. Charles Knight as 'some of the most gossiping, and therefore amusing letters in our language.'

Probably one of the most affecting effusions ever penned is poor Anne Boleyn's last letter to her capricious lord and master, embracing, as it does—to use the language of Addison—'the expostulations of a slighted

lover, the resentments of an injured woman, and the sorrows of an imprisoned queen :'—

'SIR,—Your Grace's displeasure, and my imprisonment, are things so strange unto me, as what to write, or what to excuse, I am altogether ignorant. Whereas you send unto me (willing me to confess a truth, and so obtain your favour) by such an one, whom you know to be mine ancient professed enemy, I no sooner received this message by him, than I rightly conceived your meaning; and if, as you say, confessing a truth indeed may procure my safety, I shall with all willingness and duty perform your command.

'But let not your Grace ever imagine, that your poor wife will ever be brought to acknowledge a fault, where not so much as a thought thereof preceded. And to speak a truth, never Prince had wife more loyal in all duty, and in all true affection, than you have ever found in Ann Boleyn; with which name and place I could willingly have contented myself, if God and your Grace's pleasure had been so pleased. Neither did I at any time so far forget myself in my exaltation or received Queenship, but that I always looked for such an alteration as I now find; for the ground of my preferment being on no surer foundation than your Grace's fancy, the least alteration, I knew, was fit and sufficient to draw that fancy to some other object. You have chosen me, from a low estate, to be your queen and companion, far beyond my desert or desire. If, then, you found me worthy of such honour, good your Grace, let not any light fancy, or bad counsel of mine enemies, withdraw your princely favour from me; neither let that stain, that unworthy stain, of a disloyal heart towards your good Grace, ever cast so foul a blot on your most dutiful wife, and the Infant-Princess your daughter. Try me, good King, but let me have a

lawful trial, and let not my sworn enemies sit as my accusers and judges; yea, let me receive an open trial, for my truth shall fear no open shame; then shall you see either mine innocence cleared, your suspicion and conscience satisfied, the ignominy and slander of the world stopped, or my guilt openly declared. So that whatsoever God or you may determine of me, your Grace may be freed from an open censure, and mine offence being so lawfully proved, your Grace is at liberty, both before God and man, not only to execute worthy punishment on me as an unlawful wife, but to follow your affection, already settled on that party for whose sake I am now as I am, whose name I could some good while since have pointed unto, your Grace not being ignorant of my suspicion therein.

'But if you have already determined of me, and that not only my death, but an infamous slander must bring you the enjoying of your desired happiness; then I desire of God, that he will pardon your great sin therein, and likewise mine enemies, the instruments thereof, and that he will not call you to a strict account for your unprincely and cruel usage of me, at his general judgment-seat, where both you and myself must shortly appear, and in whose judgment I doubt not (whatsoever the world may think of me) mine innocence shall be openly known and sufficiently cleared.

'My last and only request shall be, that myself may only bear the burden of your Grace's displeasure, and that it may not touch the innocent souls of those poor gentlemen who (as I understand) are likewise in strait imprisonment for my sake. If ever I have found favour in your sight, if ever the name of Ann Boleyn hath been pleasing in your ears, then let me obtain this request, and I will so leave to trouble your Grace any further, with mine earnest prayers to the Trinity to have your

Grace in his good keeping, and to direct you in all your actions. From my doleful prison in the Tower, this sixth of May.—Your most loyal and ever faithful wife,

'ANN BOLEYN.'

About twenty years ago, an interesting collection of *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies of Great Britain* was published, at the suggestion of Sir Thomas Phillips, by Mary Ann Everett Wood. It contains no fewer than 442 epistles, of which nearly 400 belong to the sixteenth century. The earliest of the remainder is a letter addressed by Matilda of Scotland, Queen of Henry I., to Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, about the year 1103, and commences with these words:—'To her piously remembered father and worthily reverenced lord, Anselm the Archbishop, Matilda, by the grace of God Queen of England, the least of the handmaidens of his holiness, wishes perpetual health in Christ.'

Certain well-known letters of the Earl of Essex (*temp.* Elizabeth), Sir Walter Raleigh, Lord Strafford, and the Earl of Derby (of the time of the Commonwealth), are remarkable for their vigorous and independent tone; while, at a later period, the correspondence of Lady

Russell and Archbishop Tillotson is characterized by its humility and unaffected piety.

Scottish Correspondence of Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.

According to Professor Innes, 'letters of correspondence are hardly met with in Scotch repositories till the sixteenth century, and even to the end of that century they are incredibly meagre and unsatisfactory.' For many admirable illustrations of Scottish correspondence during the two following centuries, I cannot do better than refer to the privately printed volumes relative to the Stirlings of Keir, the Maxwells of Pollok, the Steuarts of Grandtully, the Carnegies Earls of Southesk, and the Montgomeries Earls of Eglinton, which have appeared within the last few years, under the editorship of my learned friend Mr. William Fraser. Each of these sumptuous works embraces a large number of highly interesting letters, with facsimiles of the more important signatures, and occasionally of entire letters. In the Montgomerie Collection (to which I must confine my remarks), the

letters amount to no fewer than 332, and may be roughly classified under the two heads of historical and domestic; but not unfrequently the same effusion exhibits a curious combination of both characteristics. Some of the most interesting letters of the former class are addressed to Alexander, sixth Earl of Eglinton,—popularly called 'Greysteel'[1]—who took a very prominent part in public affairs during the reigns of Charles I. and II.—and relate to such important subjects as the subscription of the Covenant, London politics, Montrose's march, the Convention of Estates, and the death of Cromwell. Among the occasional writers are the Marquis of Montrose, General Dalzell of Binns, General Monck, Zachary Boyd, Archbishop Sharpe, Samuel Rutherfurd, and Jeremy Taylor. Of the other class

[1] This spirited nobleman was the first of the Earls of Eglinton of the *Seton* line. He was the third son of Robert, first Earl of Winton, by his Countess, Lady Margaret Montgomerie, the nephew of Alexander Seton, Earl of Dunfermline and Chancellor of Scotland, and the grandson of George, seventh Lord Seton, the faithful adherent of Mary Queen of Scots. He acquired the soubriquet of 'Greysteel,' partly from his skilful and ready use of the sword, and partly from his decided conduct towards the advisers of the Crown, when they endeavoured to interfere with one of his estates.

of letters, which are of a very miscellaneous character, no fewer than fifty are from the pen of Susanna Kennedy, third and last Countess of the ninth Earl of Eglinton, being all addressed to Andrew Fletcher of Salton, Lord Milton, and Lord Justice-Clerk, who for many years acted as her children's guardian. This remarkable person, besides being celebrated for her genius and accomplishments, was considered to be the most beautiful woman of her day, and she prominently figures in the writings of Allan Ramsay, Hamilton of Bangour, and other poets of the eighteenth century.

The Countess of 'Greysteel' addresses her absent lord respecting 'home affairs,' while he affectionately assures his 'sueitteste herte' of his speedy return. A present of *aqua vitæ*, and children's colds and fevers, form the subjects of a letter to another Countess from her mother-in-law; my Lord of Winton writes to his brother of Eglinton regarding an exchange of dogs, and the Queen's death; the Earl of Cassilis announces the demise of his 'deir bedfellow;' and Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie entreats his uncle's forgiveness for the 'crime' of marrying without his knowledge.

The quaint and touching simplicity of nearly all these letters could hardly be surpassed. The mixture of affection and formality in the style of address is also very curious. Thus, in the case of a wife to her husband, 'My dearest sweet hert'—heart being sometimes rudely *drawn* instead of written—concluding, 'Your's most dewtifullie affectionat whilst I live,' and addressed, 'To my lord and weall-beloued husband, the Erlle of Eglintoun.' Again, a mother to her son, commencing, 'My verie goode lord and loving sone,' and concluding, 'Your Lordship's most loving mother at power,' with the address, 'To my verie honorable lord and loving sone the Earle of Eglintoun.' Postscripts then, as now, are by no means uncommon, particularly in the case of ladies' letters; while the large, distinct, and elaborate signature of most of the writers forms rather a striking contrast to the shabby, and frequently illegible, subscription of the present day.

ALEXANDER, SIXTH EARL OF EGLINTON, TO ANN LIVINGSTON, HIS COUNTESS.

MY DEIR HERT,—My most louing deutie remimberit. Thir feu lynis are to lett you knaw that all freindis ar in goud helteh, prasit be God; earnestly intrei.ing you to

let me heir of your goud helthe, for I long mouche to heir from you. My seister dochter is chrisnit, and hir nam is Margarit. Your brother, my Lord Leuingstoun, is gone to Court with my Lord Marquis his goud father. The King's Maiestie has bein wery seik and in grit danger, of ane grit sualling in his laig, and he heimself aprehendit daithe ; bot, prasit be God, he is conualesit and weill agen. Sue wissing you euer all helthe and happines, I rest yours, EGLINTOUN.

SETOUN, *the* 4 *of Apryll* 1619.

To my best belouit the C. of Eglintoun : This.

SUSANNA COUNTESS OF EGLINTON TO ANDREW FLETCHER OF SALTON, LORD MILTON, AND LORD JUSTICE-CLERK. *October* 30*th*, 1729.

MY DEAR LORD,—I have allmost broke my head with conjectors about the caus of your silence. Was I your mistress, jealoucie had broke my heart ! What is the matter with you ? Is it business or love that hes ingross'd you so entirlie ? Are you such an arand husban that you wont writte to anie woman but your oun dear spous ? I wont poote you out of conceit with that prittie singular notion, but bege that you'l love me for her sake ; remembr that I'm her cusin and your humble servant. Adieu. This is my third letter without anie answer—

> ' There is no hate like love to hatred turned,
> Nor annie furie like a woman scorned.'

To the honourable Lord Milton,
at his house in Edinburgh.

About half a century after the date of Susanna Kennedy's quaint epistle to Lord Milton, we have on record one of the most extraordinary letters ever written, which appeared shortly

after its production in several periodical publications, entirely unknown, however, to the present generation. The writer of the letter in question was Sir Hew Dalrymple, M.P. for the county of Haddington, grandson of the Lord President of the Court of Session, and great-grandfather of the present Baronet of North Berwick. It is addressed to Sir Laurence Dundas, ancestor of the present Earl of Zetland; and it is gratifying to know that although it failed in regard to the particular living applied for, it was the happy means of ultimately procuring a parish for the eloquent minister in whose behalf it was penned.

SIR HEW DALRYMPLE TO SIR LAURENCE DUNDAS.

DALZELL, *May* 24, 1775.

DEAR SIR,—Having spent a long life in pursuit of pleasure and health, I am now retired from the world in poverty and with the gout; so, joining with Solomon, that, 'all is vanity and vexation of spirit,' I go to church and say my prayers.

I assure you that most of us religious people reap some little satisfaction, in hoping that you wealthy voluptuaries have a fair chance of being damned to all eternity; and that Dives shall call out for a drop of water to Lazarus, one drop of which he seldom tasted, when he had the twelve Apostles[1] in his cellar.

Now, sir, that doctrine being laid down, I wish to give

[1] Twelve hogsheads of claret.

you, my friend, a loophole to creep through. Going to church last Sunday, as usual, I saw an unknown face in the pulpit, and rising up to prayers, as others do upon like occasions, I began to look around the church to find out if there were any pretty girls there, when my attention was attracted by the foreign accent of the parson. I gave him my attention, and had my devotion awakened by the most pathetic prayer I ever heard. This made me all attention to the sermon; a finer discourse never came from the lips of a man. I returned in the afternoon, and heard the same preacher exceed his morning work by the finest chain of reasoning, conveyed by the most eloquent expressions. I immediately thought of what Agrippa said to Paul, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' I sent to ask the man of God to honour my roof, and dine with me. I asked him of his country, and what not; I even asked him if his sermons were his own composition, which he affirmed they were; I assured him I believed it, for never man had spoke or wrote so well. 'My name is Dishington,' said he. 'I am an assistant to an old minister in the Orkneys, who enjoys a fruitful benefice of £50 a year, out of which I am allowed £20 for preaching, and instructing 1200 people who live in two separate islands; out of which I pay £1, 5s. to the boatman who transports me from the one to the other. I should be happy could I continue in that terrestrial paradise; but we have a great Lord who has many little people soliciting him for many little things that he can do and that he cannot do; and if my minister dies, his succession is too great a prize not to raise up many powerful rivals to baulk my hopes of preferment.'

I asked him if he possessed any other wealth. 'Yes,' said he, 'I married the prettiest girl in the island; she has blessed me with three children, and as we are both young, we may expect more. Besides, I am so beloved

in the island, that I have all my peats brought home carriage free.'

This is my story,—now to the prayer of my petition. I never before envied you the possession of the Orkneys, which I now do only to provide for this eloquent innocent apostle. The sun has refused your barren isles his kindly influence, do not deprive them of so pleasant a preacher; let not so great a treasure be for ever lost to that damned inhospitable country; for, I assure you, were the Archbishop of Canterbury to hear him, or hear of him, he would not do less than make him an archdeacon. The man has but one weakness, that of preferring the Orkneys to all the earth.

This way, and no other, you have a chance for salvation. Do this man good, and he will pray for you. This will be a better purchase than your Irish estate, or the Orkneys. I think it will help me forward too, since I am the man who told you of the man so worthy and deserving; so pious, so eloquent, and whose prayers may do so much good.—Till I hear from you on this head, yours, in all meekness, love, and benevolence, H. D.

P.S.—Think what an unspeakable pleasure it will be, to look down from heaven, and see Rigby, Masterton, all the Campbells and Nabobs, swimming in fire and brimstone, while you are sitting with Whitefield and his old women, looking beautiful, frisking and singing; all which you may have by settling this man, after the death of the present incumbent.

Some of the more highly flavoured expressions in the preceding communication will probably remind the reader that even as late as the beginning of the present century the practice of swearing—now happily confined to a very

limited section of the community—was by no means rare in the society of gentlemen. I have in my possession an irate letter, written in 1792, by a young military relative of my own, then residing in London, to his uncle in Scotland, wherein he gives the result of a court-martial at which he and two brother officers were most unjustly accused of various fraudulent transactions, by no less a personage than William Cobbett, who had formerly filled the office of sergeant-major in the regiment to which the three 'culprits' belonged. He thus proceeds :—

'I can only now annex a copy of Sir Charles Gould's letter to me of the 2d inst., from which you will see that the three culprits have been most honourably acquitted, and which has since been approved by his Majesty. In my letter to P— of the 27th ult., I desired her to inform you that the villain who had exhibited the charges against us thought proper to disappear, though not till after he had put us to all the trouble and expense in his power. Report says he has gone to France, and I shall only add that I wish he was in hell, as he fully deserves a warm berth. He only gave in the names of forty-seven non-commissioned officers and privates of the regiment to Sir Charles Gould as his evidence to support him in the business, all of whom appeared at the Horse-Guards and before the court, not one of them having a word to say, nor did they know what brought them there. We were also obliged to have all or the greatest part of the officers here who came home with us, with upwards of

twenty non-commissioned officers and privates ; so you can easily judge what trouble the scoundrel has put us to on the occasion, for which I hope he will be damned.'

It must be acknowledged that the somewhat strong language of the indignant subaltern was, to a certain extent, justified by the utter falsity of the extraordinary charges—the motive for which I have been unable to discover.

Published Correspondence of Eminent Individuals.

The published correspondence of eminent individuals holds a prominent place in modern literature.

I.—FRANCE.

Thus, in France, during the seventeenth century, we have the letters of Balzac, Voiture, and Madame de Sévigné; while in the following century in England, we can point to the correspondence of Pope, Swift, Addison, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Gray, Cowper, and Horace Walpole. To each of these distinguished letter-writers I propose to devote a few remarks.

Jean Louis Guez de Balzac (*b.* 1594, *d.* 1655) in his youth filled the office of secretary to Cardinal la Valette at Rome, where he sedulously cultivated his natural taste for elegant compo-

sition. On his return to France he became a member of the Academy, and a special favourite of Cardinal Richelieu ; and his successful devotion to the refinement of his native language ultimately secured for him a permanent place in the literature of his country. He is usually considered to have formed his style on the magnificent rhetoric of Pliny and Seneca ; and his more elaborate productions are strikingly characterized by the stateliness of his language and the harmonious cadence of his periods. Although somewhat stiff in point of diction, and frequently exhibiting a tendency to hyperbole, his 'Letters,' which extend from 1620 to 1653, have been most generally admired, and are still frequently read. 'He passed all his life,' says Vigneul Marville, 'in writing letters, without ever catching the right characteristics of that style ;' and even those addressed to his sister are so laboured and artificial, that they are well described by Hallam as 'smelling too much of the lamp.' A good edition of Balzac's Letters, in three volumes, was published in Paris in the year 1806.

Vincent Voiture was born a few years after Balzac (1598), and died at the age of fifty.

Remarkable for his brilliant wit and fluency of expression, his society was courted by all the most influential personages in France. After his death, his writings, which are full of vigour and *bel-esprit*, were collected and published by his nephew, and have been frequently reprinted. His 'Letters' have been translated into English by various authors, including Dryden, whose edition appeared in 1736. They begin about the year 1627, and are addressed to the widow of the Marquis de Rambouillet—the associate of Richelieu, Condé, and Corneille—and to various other persons of both sexes. Although not always so correct, Voiture's letters are considered more natural in point of style than those of Balzac, which, however, are more remarkable for their meaning and good sense. They are full of gaiety and compliment to the person addressed, and are frequently imitated by Pope in his correspondence with ladies. Those written from Spain are sometimes truly witty, and always brilliant and lively.

The characteristics of Balzac and Voiture are thus contrasted by Olivet:—'The one inclined always to the sublime, the other always to the elegant (*au délicat*). The one had a lofty ima-

gination, which invested the most insignificant subjects with an air of dignity; the other a playful imagination, which caused a tone of gallantry to pervade all his thoughts. The one, even when he wished to jest, was always grave; the other, on the most serious occasions, provoked a smile.'

Marie de Rabutin Chantal, afterwards Madame de Sévigné, was born at Paris in the year 1626. Deprived of both her parents at a very early age, she was carefully educated under the superintendence of her maternal uncle, M. de Coulanges, the abbé of Livry, whose amiable character is pleasantly indicated by the soubriquet of 'Bien-bon,' which she herself applies to him. At the age of eighteen, she married the Marquis of Sévigné, who was killed in a duel about seven years afterwards, leaving a son and a daughter, to whose education the young widow religiously devoted herself. Immediately after her daughter's marriage, in 1669, to the Count de Grignan, Lieutenant-General in Languedoc, she commenced that long-continued correspondence which embraces the greater proportion of her celebrated letters. 'To read your letters,' she tells her daughter, 'and to write to you, is

the chief business of my life ; all gives way to that ; and to love as I love you makes all other friendships seem frivolous.' Although somewhat severely criticised by Lady M. W. Montagu, the letters of Madame de Sévigné have long been generally regarded as models of graceful diction ; and from first to last they furnish abundant evidence of the brilliant wit, the vivid imagination, and the exquisite taste, for which the writer was so eminently distinguished. 'They are filled,' says Voltaire, 'with anecdotes, written with freedom, and in a natural and animated style ; are an excellent criticism on studied letters of wit, and still more on those fictitious letters which aim at the epistolary style, by a recital of false sentiments and feigned adventures to an imaginary correspondent.' 'Their ease and freedom from affectation,' says Hallam, 'are more striking by contrast with the two epistolary styles which had been most admired in France,—that of Balzac, which is laboriously tumid, and that of Voiture, which becomes insipid by dint of affectation. Every one perceives that, in the *Letters of a Mother to her Daughter*, the public, in a strict sense, is not thought of ; and yet the habit of

speaking and writing what men of wit and taste would desire to hear and read, gives a certain mannerism, I will not say air of effort, even to the letters of Madame de Sévigné. . . . Her wit and talent of painting by single touches are very eminent. Scarcely any collection of letters, which contain so little that can interest a distant age, are read with such pleasure. If they have any general fault, it is a little monotony and excess of affection towards her daughter, which is reported to have wearied its object; and, in contrast with this, a little want of sensibility towards all beyond her immediate friends, and a readiness to find something ludicrous in the dangers and sufferings of others.' These remarkable letters may be described as the eloquent journal of the age of Louis Quatorze—faithfully reflecting, as they do, the tone and genius of the Court of that 'magnificent' monarch, besides touching upon most of the leading events in other parts of Europe during the seventeenth century. The most complete edition of Madame de Sévigné's letters is that of De Montmerqué, in thirteen volumes, published in 1818. A small selection, translated into English, was published in London in 1853, under the

title of *Beauties of French Literature*, edited by Mr. James Lowe. Madame de Sévigné died in 1696, in the 71st year of her age. One of the letters which she addressed to M. de Coulanges respecting the projected marriage between de Lauzun and 'the great Mademoiselle,' may be given as a specimen of her lively, piquant style; but I need scarcely state that, although the translation is a very good one, much of the spirit of the original is lost in the English version.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

PARIS, 15*th December* 1670.

I am going to tell you of the most astounding, the most surprising, the most marvellous, the most miraculous, the most triumphant, the most bewildering, the most unheard-of, the most singular, the most extraordinary, the most incredible, the most unlooked-for, the greatest, the smallest, the rarest, the commonest, the most notorious, the most secret until to-day, the most brilliant, and the most enviable affair;—an affair which we cannot believe in Paris, so how will you believe it at Lyons?—an affair which makes everybody exclaim with wonder; an affair which delights Mme. de Rohan and Mme. de Hauterive; an affair which, when it is accomplished on Sunday, all who see it will think they see double; an affair which is to happen on Sunday, but which may not be finished on Monday. I cannot make up my mind to tell you; guess it; I give you three guesses. *Do you give it up?* (Jetez-vous votre langue

aux chiens?) Well, then, I must tell you. On Sunday M. de Lauzun[1] is to marry at the Louvre—whom do you think? I give you four guesses, I give you ten, I give you a hundred! Madame de Coulanges says this should not be difficult to find out. 'Tis Mme. la Vallière: not at all, madam; then 'tis Mlle. de Retz: nothing of the kind—you are shockingly provincial. Ah, really how silly of us, say you—it is Mlle. Colbert: still less; then 'tis certainly Mlle. Créqui: worse and worse. So, after all, I must tell you. On Sunday, then, he marries at the Louvre, by the King's permission, Mademoiselle—Mademoiselle de —; guess what Mademoiselle. Why, faith, and by my faith, my pledged faith, he is to marry Mademoiselle, MADEMOISELLE, the great Mademoiselle; Mademoiselle, the daughter of MONSIEUR;[2] Mademoiselle, the granddaughter of Henri IV.; Mademoiselle d'Eu, Mademoiselle Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d'Orléans, Mademoiselle, cousin-german of the King; Mademoiselle, heir to the throne; Mademoiselle, the only wife in France worthy of MONSIEUR. There is a fine subject to talk about. If you exclaim, if you are beside yourselves, if you say that we have lied, that it is false, that we are joking with you, that it is a fine story, that it is a silly invention—if, in fine, you abuse us, we will excuse you; we have done as much before. Adieu; the letters which will come by the post will convince you whether we tell truth or not.[3]

As other celebrated French letter-writers, I may mention the names of Cardinal Mazarin,

[1] Antonin Nompar de Chumont, Marquis de Puiguilhem, depuis Duc de Lauzun.

[2] Gaston, Duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIII.

[3] For the Original of this letter, see Appendix No. I.

Rousseau, Madame de Maintenon; Madame de Villars, Madame du Deffand, Fontenelle, La Harpe, and Racine. The special characteristics of Fontenelle are liveliness and imagination; of La Harpe, vanity and egotism; and of Racine, goodness of both head and heart.

Not many years ago, my attention was called to the letters of a remarkable Frenchman, whose name is certainly not *famous* in his own country, while it is almost unknown among ourselves—I refer to Joseph Joubert, who died in the twenty-fourth year of the present century, at the age of seventy, and of whose character and writings Matthew Arnold gives a most interesting *résumé* in one of his recent 'Essays.' Characterized throughout his life by 'a changeless preference of being to seeming, knowing to showing, and studying to publishing,' the ex-Professor of Poetry further describes him as 'an unwearied note-taker, a charming letter-writer, above all, an excellent and delightful talker.' 'In spite of his infirmities, in spite of his sufferings, in spite of his obscurity, he was the happiest man alive. . . . He loved and sought *light* till he became so habituated to it, so accustomed to the joyful testimony of a good conscience, that to use his

own words, "he could no longer exist without this, and was obliged to live without reproach if he would live without misery."' In 1838 (fourteen years after Joubert's death), Chateaubriand edited a volume of his fragments, of which an admirable notice appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, from the pen of M. Sainte-Beuve; and so much curiosity was excited about the author that the collection has been thrice reprinted, enlarged by many interesting additions.[1]

Unlike their French neighbours, the Germans do not appear to have particularly distinguished themselves in the department of correspondence. Towards the end of last century, the familiar epistles of Winckelmann were translated into French, and published at Amsterdam in two volumes; and within the last forty years, the letters of Zimmermann to his friends in Switzerland (Aarau, 1830), the correspondence of Goethe and Madame Bettina von Arnim (Paris, 1843), Schiller's correspondence with

[1] The admirable letters of another distinguished Frenchman of the present century, who died at an early age, have lately been given to the public—*Correspondance de Victor Jacquemont avec sa famille et ses amis pendant son voyage dans l'Inde*, published at Paris in 1867.

Körner (London, 1849), and the letters of the two Humboldts (Leipzig and Strasburg, 1856-60), have been given to the world. Still more recently, the correspondence of three eminent German musicians—Mozart, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn—has been presented to the English public by means of Lady Wallace's successful translations.

Upwards of three hundred years ago (1564), a very interesting collection of Italian letters was published at Venice, in three pretty little volumes, under the joint editorship of Paul and Antonio Manuce and the younger Aldus. Among the writers which it embraces are Boccaccio, Petrarch, Michael Angelo, the Cardinal de Medici, Margaret Queen of Navarre, Pope Clement VII., and other eminent personages. In 1744, a series of letters of distinguished Italians of the seventeenth century was also published at Venice—the anonymous editor being Jacopo Maria Paitoni; and about a hundred years later (1841), a similar collection was published at Reggio, pertaining to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which occupies no fewer than ten volumes.

II.—ENGLAND.

As already indicated, the eighteenth century produced the most celebrated *English* letter-writers whose correspondence has been given to the world. It must be candidly acknowledged that the intrinsic value of a large proportion of these epistles is comparatively slight, their chief interest being, of course, a derivative one, from their intimate relation to persons of eminent talent. 'Pope's literary correspondence,' says De Quincey, 'with the wits, courtiers, and men of fashion of his day, is interesting as a model of what once passed for fine letter-writing. Every nerve was strained to outdo each other in carving all thoughts into a filigree work of rhetoric; and the amœbean contest was like that between two village cocks from neighbouring farms endeavouring to overcrow each other. To us, in this age of purer and more masculine taste, the whole scene takes the ludicrous air of old and young fops dancing a minuet with each other, practising the most elaborate grimaces, sinkings and risings the most awful, bows the most overshadowing, until plain walking, running, or the motions of natural dancing, are

thought too insipid for endurance.' In 1737 —a few years before his death—Pope published a volume of his literary correspondence, abounding with pleasant gossip and shrewd observation; but it appears to have been ascertained that, like the letters of Miss Seward at a later period, it was manufactured with a view to publication, and not composed of actual epistles addressed to the different persons whose names are given. Many of Pope's letters, however, contain exquisite passages of description, humour, and sentiment; and as literary productions they have probably been undervalued by some recent critics. In his later years, he abandoned the gay rhetoric which is so conspicuously displayed in his earlier letters, but it is believed that he never ceased to look with favour on his youthful style. In the case of Pope—and indeed of nearly all the celebrated letter-writers to whom I intend to refer—the selection of one or two letters from a large correspondence as suitable specimens of the writer's style, is, of course, a very difficult, if not an impossible task —and in some instances, I fear, an erroneous impression may be formed from the examples introduced. At the same time, however, I may

state that I have always endeavoured to make a judicious choice, and my allusion to the difficulty in question is merely by way of warning.

Alexander Pope to Mrs. Arabella Fermor (on her Marriage).

You are by this time satisfied how much the tenderness of one man of merit is to be preferred to the addresses of a thousand. And by this time the gentleman you have made choice of is sensible how great is the joy of having all those charms and good qualities which have pleased so many, now applied to please one only. It was but just that the same virtues which gave you reputation should give you happiness; and I can wish you no greater than that you may receive it in as high a degree yourself, as so much good-humour must infallibly give it to your husband.

It may be expected, perhaps, that one who has the title of a poet should say something more polite on this occasion; but I am really more a well-wisher to your felicity than a celebrator of your beauty. Besides, you are now a married woman, and in a way to be a great many better things than a fine lady; such as an excellent wife, a faithful friend, a tender parent, and at last, as the consequence of them all, a saint in heaven. You ought now to hear nothing but that which was all you ever desired to hear (whatever others may have spoken to you), I mean truth; and it is with the utmost that I assure you, no friend you have can more rejoice in any good that befals you, is more sincerely delighted with the prospect of your future happiness, or more unfeignedly desires a long continuance of it. I hope you will think it but just that a man who will certainly be spoken of as

your admirer after he is dead, may have the happiness to be esteemed while he is living,—Yours, etc.

THE SAME TO THE POET GAY.

September 23, 1714.

DEAR MR. GAY,—Welcome to your native soil! welcome to your friends! thrice welcome to me! whether returned in glory, blessed with Court interest, the love and familiarity of the great, and filled with agreeable hopes, or melancholy with dejection, contemplative of the changes of fortune, and doubtful for the future; whether returned a triumphant Whig or a desponding Tory, equally all hail! equally beloved and welcome to me! If happy, I am to partake in your elevation; if unhappy, you have still a warm corner in my heart, and a retreat at Binfield in the worst of times at your service. . . . I knew not whither to aim a letter after you; that was a sort of shooting flying: add to this the demand Homer had upon me, to write fifty verses a day, besides learned notes, all which are at a conclusion for this year. Rejoice with me, O my friend, that my labour is over; come and make merry with me in much feasting. We will feed among the lilies (by the lilies I mean the ladies). Are not the Rosalindas of Britain as charming as the Blousalindas of the Hague? . . . Talk not of expenses. Homer shall support his children. . . . I shall never know where to end, and am confounded in the many things I have to say to you, though they all amount but to this, that I am entirely, as ever, yours, etc.

The epistolary style of Jonathan Swift, the author of *Gulliver* and Dean of St. Patrick's, presents a remarkable contrast to the formal rhetoric of Pope, in its plain, sinewy, concise,

and homely character. In many of his letters we encounter the witty and satirical touches by which his other writings are distinguished; and the cheerful, familiar tone of those addressed to his favourite 'Stella' is universally admired. The image of his mind is reflected in almost everything he wrote; and accordingly we very rarely meet with the smallest approach to either loftiness of thought or delicacy of sentiment. A curious mixture of sunny playfulness and dismal despondency occasionally presents itself, somewhat resembling one of the special characteristics of another eminent letter-writer—to be afterwards noticed—of a very different temperament—I mean the poet Cowper.

Independently of their elegant diction, the letters of 'Junius' have been compared to those of Swift in respect to closeness, correctness of style, and force of satire; and even the celebrated 'Letter to the King,' while it must arouse a feeling of indignation in the mind of every loyal subject, cannot be perused without a certain amount of admiration.

JONATHAN SWIFT TO LORD BOLINGBROKE.

DUBLIN, *Oct.* 31, 1729.

I received your Lordship's travelling letter of several dates, at several stages, and from different nations,

languages, and religions. Neither could anything be more obliging than your kind remembrance of me in so many places. As to your ten lustres, I remember when I complained in a letter to Prior that I was fifty years old, he was half angry in jest, and answered me out of Terence —*Ista commemoratio est quasi exprobratio.* How then ought I to rattle you, when I have a dozen years more to answer for, all monastically passed in this country of liberty and delight, and money and good company! I go on answering your letter. . . . And yet, my Lord, I pretend to value money as little as you; and I will call five hundred witnesses (if you will take Irish witnesses) to prove it. I renounce your whole philosophy, because it is not your practice. . . . But, in the meantime, do not brag—retrenchments are not your talent. . . . I wish you could learn arithmetic, that three and two make five, and will never make more. . . . My Lord, I hate and love to write to you; it gives me pleasure, and kills me with melancholy. The d— take stupidity, that it will not come to supply the want of philosophy.

THE SAME TO MR. GAY.

DUBLIN, *March* 19, 1729.

I deny it. I do write to you according to the old stipulation; for, when you kept your old company, when I writ to one, I writ to all. But I am ready to enter into a new bargain, since you are got into a new world, and will answer all your letters. You are first to present my most humble respects to the Duchess of Queensberry, and let her know that I never dine without thinking of her; although it be with some difficulty that I can obey her when I dine with forks that have but two prongs, and when the sauce is not very consistent. You must likewise tell her Grace that she is a general toast among all honest folks here; and particularly at the Deanery, even in the face of my Whig subjects. . . . (*After an*

allusion to Pope, etc.) I ride and walk whenever good weather invites, and am reputed the best walker in this town and five miles round. I writ lately to Mr. Pope. I wish you had a little villakin in his neighbourhood; but you are yet too volatile, and any lady with a coach and six horses would carry you to Japan.

Born in 1672—five years after the author of *Gulliver*,—Joseph Addison terminated his comparatively short career at the age of forty-seven. Only a few of his letters appear to have been preserved. Although most of them were written at an early period of his life, they exhibit many evidences of that delightful humour which is more fully developed in the classic pages of the *Spectator*,—now, unfortunately, too little known. For sweetness of expression, propriety of treatment, and dignity of tone, the language of Addison can hardly be surpassed. 'Whoever wishes,' says Dr. Johnson, 'to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.'

In the capacity of Secretary of State, it has been said that he was a better man of business than Prior, but still a bad one. His business letters, however, which are extant, are clear and concise, as well as graceful, and certainly do not

justify the reproach of Pope, that 'he could not issue an order without losing his time in quest of fine expressions.'

JOSEPH ADDISON TO MR. CONGREVE.

DEAR SIR,—I was very sorry to hear in your last letter that you were so terribly afflicted with the gout, though for your comfort I believe you are the first English poet that has been complimented with the distemper. I was myself at that time sick of a fever, which I believe proceeded from the same cause; but at present I am so well recovered that I can scarce forbear beginning my letter with Tully's preface, *Si vales bene est, ego quidem valeo.* You must excuse me for giving you a line of Latin now and then, since I find myself in some danger of losing the tongue, for I perceive a new language, like a new mistress, is apt to make a man forget all his old ones. I assure you I met with a very remarkable instance of this nature at Paris, in a poor Irishman that had lost the little English he had brought over with him, without being able to learn any French in its stead. I asked him what language he spoke; he very innocently answered me, 'No language, Monsieur,' which, as I afterwards found, were all the words he was master of in both tongues. I am at present in a town where all the languages in Europe are spoken except English, which is not to be heard, I believe, within fifty miles of the place. My greatest diversion is to run over in my thoughts the variety of noble scenes I was entertained with before I came hither. I don't believe, as good a poet as you are, that you can make finer landscapes than those about the King's houses, or, with all your descriptions, build a more magnificent palace than Versailles.

I am, however, so singular as to prefer Fontainebleau to all the rest. It is situated among rocks and woods, that give you a fine variety of savage prospects. The King has humoured the genius of the place, and only made use of so much art as is necessary to help and regulate nature without reforming her too much. . . . But I begin to talk like Dr. Lister. To pass, therefore, from works of nature to those of art: in my opinion, the pleasantest part of Versailles is the gallery. Every one sees on each side of it something that will be sure to please him, for one of them commands a view of the finest garden in the world, and the other is wainscoted with looking-glass. The history of the present King to the year 16,[1] is painted on the roof by Le Brun, so that his Majesty has actions enough by him to furnish another gallery much longer than the first. He is represented with all the terror and majesty that you can imagine in every part of the picture, and sees his young face as perfectly drawn in the roof as his present one in the side. The painter has represented his Most Christian Majesty under the figure of Jupiter throwing thunderbolts, and striking terror into the Danube and Rhine, that lie astonished and blasted with lightning a little above the cornice. I believe by this time you are afraid I shall carry you from room to room, and lead you through the whole palace; truly, if I had not tired you already I could not forbear showing you a staircase that they say is the noblest in its kind; but after so tedious a letter, I shall conclude with the petition to you, that you would deliver the enclosed to Mr. Montague, for I am afraid of interrupting him with my impertinence when he is engaged in more serious affairs. *Tu faciles aditus et mollia tempora novis.*—I am, etc.

Blois, 10*br*, 1699.

[1] The sixteenth year of his reign is supposed to be meant.

Familiarly acquainted with both Addison and Pope was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the eldest daughter of Evelyn Pierrepoint, Earl (afterwards Duke) of Kingston, who appears to have received a classical education. At the age of twenty-two (1712), she married Mr. Edward Wortley Montagu,[1] ambassador to Constantinople, whom she accompanied to the East; and on her journey, and during her residence in the Levant, she wrote those celebrated letters which form one of the most delightful books in the English language. 'Keep my letters,' she writes to one of her correspondents, 'they will be as good as Madame de Sévigné's forty years hence;' and her prediction has been amply fulfilled. It has been alleged that the essential difference between these two celebrated letter-writers is this, that 'the Frenchwoman speaks out of the abundance of her *heart*, and the Englishwoman out of the clearness of her *head*.' Probably many of her numerous admirers will not altogether concur in the opinion expressed by Leigh Hunt in his apostrophe to Lady Mary:—'*Loveable*, indeed, thou wert not, what-

[1] Son of the Hon. Sydney Montagu, and grandson of the Earl of Sandwich.

ever thou mightest have been rendered; but *admirable* thou wert, and ever wilt thou be thought so.' She at first adopted the prevailing style of the wits of the day, but her own good sense, as well as foreign travel and extended commerce with the world, ultimately induced her to abandon their formality and affectation; and accordingly her later letters have generally been regarded as her most brilliant productions. The most interesting of these are addressed to the Countess of Oxford, to her own daughter (the Countess of Bute), and to Sir James Steuart. A third edition of her Life and Letters—in two volumes 8vo,—edited by her great-grandson, the late Lord Wharncliffe, appeared in 1861.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU TO HER INTENDED HUSBAND (*cir.* 1712).

I tremble for what we are doing. Are you sure you shall love me for ever? shall we never repent? . . . Reflect now for the last time in what manner you must take me. I shall come to you with only a nightgown and petticoat, and that is all you will get by me. . . . 'Tis something odd for a woman that brings nothing to expect anything; but after the way of my education, I dare not pretend to live but in some degree suitable to it. I had rather die than return to a dependency upon relations I have disobliged. Save me from that fear if you love me.

FIRST LETTER TO THE SAME AFTER MARRIAGE.

I don't know very well how to begin. I am perfectly unacquainted with a proper matrimonial style. After all, I think 'tis best to write as if we were not married at all. I lament your absence as if you were still my lover, and I am impatient to hear that you have fixed a time for your return. . . . (*After alluding to the children of the family in which she was residing, she thus proceeds:*—) It furnishes my imagination with agreeable pictures of our future life; and I flatter myself with the hopes of one day enjoying with you the same satisfactions, and that, after as many years together, I may see you retain the same fondness for me as I shall certainly do for you, when the noise of a nursery may have more charms for us than the music of an opera.

TO HER SISTER (*cir.* 1727).

My cure for lowness of spirits is not drinking nasty water, but galloping all day, and a moderate glass of champagne at night in good company; and I believe that this regimen, closely followed, is one of the most wholesome that can be prescribed, and may save a world of filthy doses, and more filthy doctor's fees at the year's end. I rode to Twickenham last night, and, after so long a stay in town, am not sorry to find myself in my garden; our neighbourhood is something improved by the removal of some old maids, and the arrival of some fine gentlemen.

TO HER DAUGHTER, THE COUNTESS OF BUTE (*cir.* 1750).

To say truth, I think myself an uncommon kind of creature, being an old woman without superstition, peevishness, or censoriousness. I am so far from thinking

my youth was passed in an age of more virtue and sense than the present, that I am of opinion the world improves every day. I confess I remember to have dressed for St. James' Chapel with the same thoughts your daughters will have at the opera, but am not of the *Rambler's* mind, that the church is the proper place to make love in ; and the peepers behind a fan, who divided their glances between their lovers and their prayer-book, were not at all modester than those that now laugh aloud in public walks.

The poet Gray—whose touching 'Elegy' is so universally appreciated—was born in 1716, and died at the age of fifty-five. Although somewhat indisposed to mingle in the society of the great world, he delighted to comment upon its sayings and doings in his letters to his literary friends, which are justly admired for the chasteness of their style and the elegance of their diction. Wherever he went, he made copious notes, and wrote graphic descriptions of everything that came under his observation, to his various correspondents. In 1739, he accompanied Horace Walpole, as travelling companion, in a tour through France and Italy ; and his account of all he saw in Florence, Rome, and elsewhere, is characterized by fine taste, as well as profound learning. After two years' travel together, Gray and Walpole sepa-

rated at Reggio, in consequence of 'an unfortunate disagreement arising from the difference of their tempers.' According to his biographer Mason, Gray was curious, pensive, and philosophical; while Walpole was gay, lively, and inconsiderate. About twenty-six years later (1765), he made a journey into Scotland as far as Dunkeld and Killiecrankie; and the description of his tour, in his letters to his friends, abounds with touches of his peculiar style and humour. His interesting correspondence with his friend the Rev. William Mason, was published by the Rev. John Mitford in 1853.

THOMAS GRAY TO THE REV. W. MASON.

1765.

DEAR MASON,—*Res est sacra miser* (says the poet), but I say it is the happy man that is the sacred thing, and therefore let the profane keep their distance. . . . I am returned from Scotland, charmed with my expedition; it is of the Highlands I speak; the Lowlands are worth seeing once, but the mountains are ecstatic, and ought to be visited in pilgrimage once a year. None but those monstrous creatures of God know how to join so much beauty with so much horror. A fig for your poets, painters, gardeners, and clergymen, that have not been among them; their imagination can be made up of nothing but bowling-greens, flowering shrubs, horse-ponds, Fleet-ditches, shell grottoes, and Chinese rails. Then I had so beautiful an autumn. Italy could hardly produce a nobler

scene, and this so sweetly contrasted with that perfection of nastiness and total want of accommodation, that Scotland only can supply. Oh! you would have blessed yourself. I shall certainly go again; what a pity it is I cannot draw, nor describe, nor ride on horseback. . . . Dr. Balguy says Mrs. Mason is very handsome, so you are his friend for ever. Lord Newnham, I hear, has ill-health of late; it is a nervous case, so have a care: how do your eyes do? Adieu! my respects to the bride. I would kiss her, but you stand by and pretend it is not the fashion, though I know they do so at Hull.—I am, ever yours. T. G.

TO THE SAME ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE.

March 28th, 1767.

MY DEAR MASON,—I break in upon you at a moment when we least of all are permitted to disturb our friends, only to say that you are daily and hourly present to my thoughts. If the worst be not yet passed, you will neglect and pardon me; but if the last struggle be over,—if the poor object of your long anxieties be no longer sensible to your kindness, or to her own sufferings, allow me (at least in idea, for what could I do were I present more than this?) to sit by you in silence, and pity from my heart, not her who is at rest, but you who lose her. May He who made us, the Master of our pleasures and of our pains, preserve and support you. Adieu! I have long understood how little you had to hope.

The letters of another poet—Cowper (*b.* 1731, *d.* 1800)—are regarded by many persons as the most delightful correspondence in the English language. Remarkable for their combination

of good sense and fine feeling, they are, at the same time, full of fun, anecdote, and gentle sarcasm, 'toned down (as has been said) by a tender shadow of melancholy,' and sometimes strangely display the union of humour and despair.

Cowper's letters are well described by a writer in an early volume of the *Quarterly Review*, as possessing excellencies of a very opposite character,—'a naïve simplicity, arising from perfect goodness of heart and singleness of purpose, contrasted with a deep acquaintance with the follies and vices of human nature, and a keen sense of humour and ridicule. They unite,' he continues, 'the playfulness of a child, the affectionateness of a woman, and the strong sense of a man;' and, after enumerating their other good qualities, he pronounces the verdict to which I have already referred, that Cowper is the most delightful letter-writer in the English language. In point of style, moreover, these letters are entitled to the highest praise, being, in the words of Archdeacon Hare, 'the pattern of pure, graceful, idiomatic English.'

Friendly correspondence is happily defined by Cowper as 'talking upon paper;' and some

one else has said that a good letter ought to be 'the mirror of one's conversation.' Unquestionably that quality is abundantly exhibited in the case of Cowper's own letters, which are nothing more nor less than a faithful picture of his daily life; and almost every word that flows from his pen is a distinct reflection of his mind. One of his most frequent correspondents, Lady Hesketh, when referring to the same subject, enforces the propriety of always writing 'what comes uppermost,' in accordance with the opinion and occasional practice of Edmund Burke, who thus expresses himself in a letter to his friend Richard Shackleton:—'I do not know to whom I could write with greater freedom and less regularity than you; for as the thoughts come crowding into my head, I cannot forbear putting them down, be they in what order or disorder they will.' The best edition of Cowper's Works, embracing his extensive correspondence and accompanied by an admirable biography, is that of Southey, in fifteen volumes 12mo, published in 1837-8.

WILLIAM COWPER TO LADY HESKETH.[1]

WESTON LODGE, *Feb.* 4, 1789.

MY DEAR COUSIN,—A letter of mine is no sooner sealed and sent than I begin to be dissatisfied with, and to hate it. I have accordingly hated the two letters that I have sent to *you* since your departure, on many accounts, but principally because they have neither of them expressed any proportion of what I have felt. I have mourned for the loss of you, and they have not said so. Deal with them, as you desire me, for another reason, to deal with yours,—burn them, for they deserve it. . . . With Mrs. Unwin's best compliments, I remain, my beloved coz, most truly thine, WM. C.

THE SAME TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQUIRE.

THE LODGE, *June 8th*, 1790.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Among the many who love and esteem you, there is none who rejoices more in your felicity than myself. Far from blaming, I commend you much for connecting yourself, young as you are, with a well-chosen companion for life. Entering on the state with uncontaminated morals, you have the best possible prospect of happiness, and will be secure against a thousand and ten thousand temptations, to which, at an early period of life, in such a Babylon as you must necessarily inhabit, you would otherwise have been exposed. I see it too in the light you do, as likely to be advantageous to you in your profession. Men of business have a better opinion of a candidate for employment who is married, because he has given bond to the world, as you observe,

[1] Lady Hesketh was the daughter of the poet's uncle, Mr. Ashley Cowper, to whose other daughter, Theodora, he was at one time deeply attached.

and to himself, for diligence, industry, and attention. It is altogether, therefore, a subject of much congratulation; and mine, to which I add Mrs. Unwin's, is very sincere. Samson at his marriage proposed a riddle to the Philistines. I am no Samson, neither are you a Philistine; yet expound to me the following, if you can: —What are they which stand at a distance from each other, and meet without ever moving? Should you be so fortunate as to guess it, you may propose it to the company when you celebrate your nuptials; and if you can win thirty changes of raiment by it, as Samson did by his, let me tell you they will be no contemptible acquisition to a young beginner. You will not, I hope, forget your way to Weston, in consequence of your marriage, where you and yours will be always welcome.

Probably the largest published correspondence in the English language, and the last to which I shall refer at any length, is that of Horace Walpole, third son of the Prime Minister, and ultimately fourth Earl of Orford, who was born in 1717, and died in 1797, at the age of fourscore. Mr. Peter Cuningham's edition of his Letters, in nine vols. 8vo, published in 1859, contains no fewer than 2665 epistles, extending over a period of upwards of sixty years. Walpole's letters have been described as 'inimitable pictures of society and of human character, drawn by the hand of one who was a master in the delineation of scenes from familiar life;

not, it is true, inspiring his figures with poetic truth or serious significance, but shedding over all of them a gaily comic light. They are a kind of satires; and few compositions claiming that name are equal to them in lively wit, in striking grasp of character, in picturesque colouring of incidents, and in apposite, epigrammatic, vigorous language.' Whatever may be thought of Walpole's tastes and friendships in the present day, they were certainly quite *sincere;* and accordingly it is to be hoped that no impartial reader will acquiesce in Macaulay's estimate of his character, to the effect that 'affectation is the essence of the man, and if it were taken away nothing would be left.' No doubt, his earliest letters are overloaded with classical quotations; but it ought to be borne in mind, that he wrote at a period when every man of letters considered that an idea was greatly enhanced in value when expressed in Latin; and moreover, the blemish in question entirely disappears in his later life. 'The bulk, as well as the best of his letters,' in the opinion of Mr. Cuningham, 'are addressed to people at a distance: to Mann, in Florence; to Montagu, on the skirts of a Northamptonshire

forest; to Bentley, in exile for debt; to Cole, in the Fens of Cambridgeshire; to Mason, in his Yorkshire parsonage; to blind Madame du Deffand, in the gilded saloons of Paris; and to Lady Ossory, seeking solitude, after her divorce, in the woods of Ampthill. . . . He lived throughout a long life in the best society and in the best clubs. . . . His letters are absolute jests and story-books, and the exact standard of easy, engaging writing. . . . He has the art to interest us in very little matters, and to enliven subjects seemingly the most barren.' Walpole himself tells us that his letters are to be looked upon 'in their proper character of newspapers,' and that if they possess any excellence in point of style, it must be imputed to his careful study of the correspondence of Madame de Sévigné and his friend Gray. 'I generally write in a hurry,' he informs one of his many correspondents, 'and say anything that comes into my head. . . . I cannot *compose* letters like Pliny and Pope.' Elsewhere he says to Montagu, 'Mine is a life of letter-writing.' Correspondence, in short, was his favourite pursuit.

HORACE WALPOLE TO MISS BERRY.

BERKELEY SQUARE, *May* 26, 1791.

I AM rich in letters from you. I received that by Lord Elgin's courier first, as you expected, and its elder the next day. You tell me mine entertains you ; *tant mieux.* It is my wish, but my wonder ; for I live so little in the world, that I do not know the present generation by sight ; for, though I pass by them in the streets, the hats with valences, the folds above the chin of the ladies, and the dirty shirts and shaggy hair of the young men, who have levelled nobility almost as much as the nobility in France have, have confounded all individuality. Besides, if I did go to public places and assemblies, which my going to roost earlier prevents, the bats and owls do not begin to fly abroad till far in the night, when they begin to see and be seen. However, one of the empresses of fashion, the Duchess of Gordon, uses fifteen or sixteen hours of her four-and-twenty. I heard her journal of last Monday. She first went to Handel's music in the Abbey ; she then clambered over the benches, and went to Hastings' trial in the Hall ; after dinner, to the play ; then to Lady Lucan's assembly ; after that to Ranelagh, and returned to Mrs. Hobart's faro-table ; gave a ball herself in the evening of that morning, into which she must have got a good way ; and set out for Scotland the next day. Hercules could not have achieved a quarter of her labours in the same space of time. . . . The rest of my letter must be literary, for we have no news. (*Then follow strictures on Boswell's Life of Dr. Johnson, Burke's Character of Rousseau, etc.*) . . . When you return, I shall lend you three volumes in quarto of another work, with which you will be delighted. They are State letters in the reigns of Henry VIII., Mary, Elizabeth, and James ; being the correspondence of the Talbot and Howard

families, given by a Duke of Norfolk to the Heralds' Office, where they have lain for a century neglected, buried under dust and unknown, till discovered by a Mr. Lodge, a genealogist, who, to gratify his passion, procured to be made a pursuivant. Oh! how curious they are! Henry seizes an alderman who refused to contribute to a benevolence; sends him to the army on the borders; orders him to be exposed in the front line; and if that does not do, to be treated with the utmost rigour of military discipline. His daughter Bess is not less a Tudor. The mean, unworthy treatment of the Queen of Scots is striking; . . . but the most amusing passage is one in a private letter, as it paints the awe of children for their parents a *little* differently from modern habitudes. Mr. Talbot, second son of the Earl of Shrewsbury, was a member of the House of Commons, and was married. He writes to the Earl, his father, and tells him that a young woman of a very good character has been recommended to him for chambermaid to his wife, and if his Lordship does not disapprove of it, he will hire her. There are many letters of news that are very entertaining too; but it is nine o'clock, and I must go to Lady Cecilia's.

As other distinguished letter-writers I may mention Oliver Goldsmith, Laurence Sterne, David Hume, Benjamin Franklin, David Garrick, Edward Gibbon, Robert Burns,—and, nearer our own times, Henry Kirke White, Lord Byron, George Crabbe, Charles Lamb, Robert Southey, Sydney Smith, and Lord Jeffrey; while the gentler sex is well represented by Mrs. Godwin (Mary Wolstoncroft),

Hannah More, Mrs. Tonna ('Charlotte Elizabeth' Browne), Jane and Anna-Maria Porter, Mrs. Maclean ('L. E. L.'), Felicia Hemans, Mrs. Fletcher (better known as Miss Jewsbury), Lady Eastlake (Elizabeth Rigby), Miss Mitford, Mrs. Bray, Miss Pardoe, and Lady Duff-Gordon.

The great charm of Lady Duff-Gordon's *Letters from Egypt*, consists in their faithful reflection of her daily thoughts. 'I regret,' she says, 'that so many of my letters have been lost; but I can't replace them. I tried, but it felt like *committing a forgery*.' Easy, pleasing, graphic, and unaffected in her style, she says nothing she does not feel, and only what is passing through her mind at the moment. A less ingenuous writer once said:—'The freedom I shall use of thinking aloud or talking upon paper may indeed prove me a fool, but it will prove me one of the best sort of fools,—the honest ones.' Lady Duff-Gordon's letters have been contrasted with those of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. We can hardly imagine, however, that any honest critic would hesitate to apply to the more recent penwoman the epithet which Leigh Hunt withheld from Lady Mary; and although some of her senti-

ments may appear to savour of optimism—a quality now rarely encountered—the coldest of her readers cannot fail to admire her catholicity of spirit and her largeness of heart.

Like the letters of Dr. Johnson, those of Gibbon are, as a general rule, short, when compared with the correspondence of other literary men. As one of many good examples, I may refer to an admirable letter which the historian addressed to Mrs. Porten, from Lausanne, in the year 1756. Poor Goldsmith, on the other hand, is not particularly laconic. I do not venture to introduce one of his humorous letters to his friend Bob Bryanton of Ballymahon, dated Edinburgh, 26th September 1753, in which he is not very complimentary to the natives of this 'dismal' and 'unfruitful' portion of the United Kingdom; but as an effusion full of character, I make no apology for giving the following laughable description of the poet-errant's second sally in quest of adventures, in a letter to his affectionate mother:—

My dear mother, If you will sit down and calmly listen to what I say, you shall be fully resolved in every one of those many questions you have asked me. I went to Cork and converted my horse, which you prize so much higher than Fiddle-back, into cash, took my pas-

sage in a ship bound for America, and, at the same time, paid the captain for my freight and all the other expenses of my voyage. But it so happened that the wind did not answer for three weeks; and you know, mother, that I could not command the elements. My misfortune was, that, when the wind served, I happened to be with a party in the country, and my friend the captain never inquired after me, but set sail with as much indifference as if I had been on board. The remainder of my time I employed in the city and its environs, viewing everything curious, and you know no one can starve while he has money in his pocket.

Reduced, however, to my last two guineas, I began to think of my dear mother and friends whom I had left behind me, and so bought that generous beast Fiddle-back, and bade adieu to Cork with only five shillings in my pocket. This, to be sure, was but a scanty allowance for man and horse towards a journey of above a hundred miles; but I did not despair, for I knew I must find friends on the road.

I recollected particularly an old and faithful acquaintance I made at college, who had often and earnestly pressed me to spend a summer with him, and he lived but eight miles from Cork. This circumstance of vicinity he would expatiate on to me with peculiar emphasis. 'We shall,' says he, 'enjoy the delights of both city and country, and you shall command my stable and my purse.'

However, upon the way I met a poor woman all in tears, who told me her husband had been arrested for a debt he was not able to pay, and that his eight children must now starve, bereaved as they were of his industry, which had been their only support. I thought myself at home, being not far from my good friend's house, and therefore parted with a moiety of all my store; and pray, mother, ought I not to have given her the other half-

crown, for what she got would be of little use to her? However, I soon arrived at the mansion of my affectionate friend, guarded by the vigilance of a huge mastiff, who flew at me and would have torn me to pieces but for the assistance of a woman, whose countenance was not less grim than that of the dog; yet she with great humanity relieved me from the jaws of this Cerberus, and was prevailed on to carry up my name to her master.

Without suffering me to wait long, my old friend, who was then recovering from a severe fit of sickness, came down in his nightcap, nightgown, and slippers, and embraced me with the most cordial welcome, showed me in, and, after giving me a history of his indisposition, assured me that he considered himself peculiarly fortunate in having under his roof the man he most loved on earth, and whose stay with him must, above all things, contribute to perfect his recovery. I now repented sorely I had not given the poor woman the other half-crown, as I thought all my bills of humanity would be punctually answered by this worthy man. I revealed to him my whole soul; I opened to him all my distresses; and freely owned that I had but one half-crown in my pocket; but that now, like a ship after weathering out the storm, I considered myself secure in a safe and hospitable harbour. He made no answer, but walked about the room, rubbing his hands as one in deep study. This I imputed to the sympathetic feelings of a tender heart, which increased my esteem for him, and, as that increased, I gave the most favourable interpretation to his silence. I construed it into delicacy of sentiment, as if he dreaded to wound my pride by expressing his commiseration in words, leaving his generous conduct to speak for itself.

It now approached six o'clock in the evening; and as I had eaten no breakfast, and as my spirits were

raised, my appetite for dinner grew uncommonly keen. At length the old woman came into the room with two plates, one spoon, and a dirty cloth, which she laid upon the table. This appearance, without increasing my spirits, did not diminish my appetite. My protectress soon returned with a small bowl of sago, a small porringer of sour milk, a loaf of stale brown bread, and the heel of an old cheese all over crawling with mites. My friend apologized that his illness obliged him to live on slops, and that better fare was not in the house; observing, at the same time, that a milk diet was certainly the most healthful; and at eight o'clock he again recommended a regular life, declaring that for his part he would *lie down with the lamb and rise with the lark.* My hunger was at this time so exceedingly sharp that I wished for another slice of the loaf, but was obliged to go to bed without even that refreshment.

This lenten entertainment I had received made me resolve to depart as soon as possible; accordingly, next morning, when I spoke of going, he did not oppose my resolution; he rather commended my design, adding some very sage counsel upon the occasion. 'To be sure,' said he, 'the longer you stay away from your mother the more you will grieve her and your other friends; and possibly they are already afflicted at hearing of this foolish expedition you have made.' Notwithstanding all this, and without any hope of softening such a sordid heart, I again renewed the tale of my distress, and asking 'how he thought I could travel above a hundred miles upon one half-crown?' I begged to borrow a single guinea, which I assured him should be repaid with thanks. 'And you know, sir,' said I, 'it is no more than I have done for you.' To which he firmly answered, 'Why, look you, Mr. Goldsmith, that is neither here nor there. I have paid you all you ever lent

me, and this sickness of mine has left me bare of cash. But I have bethought myself of a conveyance for you; sell your horse, and I will furnish you a much better one to ride on.' I readily grasped at his proposal, and begged to see the nag; on which he led me to his bed-chamber, and from under the bed he pulled out a stout oak stick. 'Here he is,' said he; 'take this in your hand, and it will carry you to your mother's with more safety than such a horse as you ride.' I was in doubt, when I got it into my hand, whether I should not, in the first place, apply it to his pate; but a rap at the street-door made the wretch fly to it, and when I returned to the parlour, he introduced me, as if nothing of the kind had happened, to the gentleman who entered, as Mr. Goldsmith, his most ingenious and worthy friend, of whom he had so often heard him speak with rapture. I could scarcely compose myself; and must have betrayed indignation in my mien to the stranger, who was a counsellor-at-law in the neighbourhood, a man of engaging aspect and polite address.

After spending an hour, he asked my friend and me to dine with him at his house. This I declined at first, as I wished to have no farther communication with my hospitable friend; but at the solicitation of both I at last consented, determined as I was by two motives; one that I was prejudiced in favour of the looks and manner of the counsellor; and the other, that I stood in need of a comfortable dinner. And there, indeed, I found everything that I could wish, abundance without profusion, and elegance without affectation. In the evening, when my old friend, who had eaten very plentifully at his neighbour's table, but talked again of lying down with the lamb, made a motion to me for retiring, our generous host requested I should take a bed with him, upon which I plainly told my old friend that he

might go home and take care of the horse he had given me, but that I should never re-enter his doors. He went away with a laugh, leaving me to add this to the other little things the counsellor already knew of his plausible neighbour.

And now, my dear mother, I found sufficient to reconcile me to all my follies; for here I spent three whole days. The counsellor had two sweet girls for his daughters, who played enchantingly on the harpsichord; and yet it was but a melancholy pleasure I felt the first time I heard them; for that being the first time also that either of them had touched the instrument since their mother's death, I saw the tears in silence trickle down their father's cheeks. I every day endeavoured to go away, but every day was pressed and obliged to stay. On my going, the counsellor offered me his purse, with a horse and servant to convey me home; but the latter I declined, and only took a guinea to bear my necessary expenses on the road. OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

To Mrs. Anne Goldsmith, Ballymahon.

As epistolary specimens of four of the other literary celebrities already referred to in the capacity of distinguished letter-writers, I insert the following without any comment:—

THE REV. LAURENCE STERNE TO HIS BELOVED FRIEND 'EUGENIUS.'

THE first time I have dipped my pen in the ink-horn for this week past is to write to you, and thank you most sincerely for your kind epistle. Will this be a sufficient apology for my letting it be ten days upon my table without answering it? I trust it will: I am sure my own

feelings tell me so; because I felt it impossible for me to do anything that is ungracious towards you. It is not every hour, or day, or week of a man's life, that is a fit season for the duties of Friendship. Sentiment is not always at hand; pride and folly, and what is called business, often-times keep it at a distance; and, without Sentiment, what is Friendship?—a name! a shadow!—But to prevent a misapplication of all this (though why should I fear it from so kind and gentle a spirit as yours?) you must know, that by the carelessness of my curate, or his wife, or his maid, or some one within his gates, the parsonage house at —— was about a fortnight ago burnt to the ground, with the furniture which belonged to me, and a pretty good collection of books. The loss about three hundred and fifty pounds. The poor man, with his wife, took the wings of the next morning and fled away. This has given me real vexation; for so much was my pity and esteem for him, that, as soon as I heard of this disaster, I sent to desire he would come and take up his abode with me till another habitation was ready to receive him; but he was gone, and, as I am told, through fear of my prosecution! Heavens! how little did he know me, to suppose I was among the number of those wretches that heap misfortune upon misfortune! and when the load is almost insupportable, still add to the weight. God, who reads my heart, knows it to be true, that I wish rather to share than increase the burden of the miserable; to dry up, instead of adding a single drop to the stream of sorrow. As for the dirty trash of this world, I regard it not! the loss of it does not cost me a sigh; for, after all, I may say with the Spanish captain, that I am as good a gentleman as the King, only not quite so rich.—But to the point.

Shall I expect you here this summer? I much wish that you may make it convenient to gratify me in a visit

for a few weeks: I will give you a roast fowl for your dinner, and a clean table-cloth every day, and tell you a story by way of dessert. In the heat of the day we will sit in the shade, and, in the evening, the fairest of all the milk-maids, who pass by my gate, shall weave a garland for you. If I should not be so fortunate to see you here, do contrive to meet me here the beginning of October. I shall stay here about a fortnight, and then seek a kindlier climate. This plaguy cough of mine seems to gain ground, and will bring me at last to my grave, in spite of all I can do; but while I have strength to run away from it, I will—I have been wrestling with it for these twenty years past; and what with laughter and good spirits have prevented it giving me a fall; but my antagonist presses closer than ever upon me, and I have nothing left on my side but another abroad! A-propos —are you for a scheme of that sort? If not, perhaps you will be so good as to accompany me as far as Dover, that we may laugh together on the beach, to put Neptune in a good humour before I embark. God bless you. Adieu. L. STERNE.

CHARLES LAMB TO P. G. PATMORE.

DEAR P.,—I am so poorly! I have been to a funeral, where I made a pun, to the consternation of the rest of the mourners. And we had wine. I can't describe to you the howl which the widow set up at proper intervals. Dash could, for it was not unlike what he makes.

The letter I sent you was one directed to the care of E. White, India House, for Mrs. Hazlitt. '*Which* Mrs. Hazlitt I don't yet know, but A. has taken it to France on speculation. Really it is embarrassing. There is Mrs. present H., Mrs. late H., and Mrs. John H., and to which of the three Mrs. Wigginses it appertains I don't know. I wanted to open it, but it's transportation.

I am sorry you are plagued about your book. I would strongly recommend you to take for one story Massinger's 'Old Law.' It is exquisite. I can think of no other.

Dash is frightful this morning. He whines and stands up on his hind legs. He misses Becky, who is gone to town. I took him to Barnet the other day, and he couldn't eat his victuals after it. Pray God his intellects be not slipping.

Mary is gone out for some soles. I suppose it's no use to ask you to come and partake of 'em; else there's a steam-vessel.

I am doing a tragi-comedy in two acts, and have got on tolerably; but it will be refused, or worse. I never had luck with anything my name was put to.

Oh, I am so poorly! I *waked* it at my cousin's the bookbinder's, who is now with God; or if he is not, it's no fault of mine.

We hope the Frank wines do not disagree with Mrs. Patmore. By the way, I like her.

Did you ever taste frogs? Get them, if you can. They are like little Lilliput rabbits, only a thought nicer.

Christ, how sick I am!—not of the world, but of the widow's shrub. She's sworn under £6000, but I think she perjured herself. She howls in E *la*, and I comfort her in B flat. You understand music?

If you haven't got Massinger, you have nothing to do but go to the first bibliothèque you can light upon at Boulogne, and ask for it (Gifford's edition), and if they haven't got it, you can have 'Athalie,' par Monsieur Racine, and make the best of it. But that 'Old Law' is delicious.

'No shrimps!' (That's in answer to Mary's question about how the soles are to be done.)

I am uncertain where this *wandering* letter may reach

you. What you mean by Poste Restante, God knows. Do you mean I must pay the postage? So I do, to Dover.

We had a merry passage with the widow at the Commons. She was howling—part howling and part giving directions to the proctor—when crash! down went my sister through a crazy chair, and made the clerks grin, and I grinned, and the widow tittered—*and then I knew that she was not inconsolable.* Mary was more frightened than hurt.

She'd make a good match for anybody (by she, I mean the widow).

> 'If he bring but a *relict* away,
> He is happy, nor heard to complain.'
>
> SHENSTONE.

Procter has got a wen growing out at the nape of his neck, which his wife wants him to have cut off; but I think it rather an agreeable excrescence—like his poetry—redundant. Hone has hanged himself for debt. Godwin was taken up for picking pockets. Becky takes to bad courses. Her father was blown up in a steam machine. The coroner found it insanity. I should not like him to sit on my letter.

Do you observe my direction? Is it Gallic?—Classical?

Do try and get some frogs. You must ask for 'grenouilles' (green-eels). They don't understand 'frogs,' though it's a common phrase with us.

If you go through Bulloign (Boulogne), inquire if old Godfrey is living, and how he got home from the Crusades. He must be a very old man now.

If there is anything new in politics or literature in France, keep it till I see you again, for I'm in no hurry. Chatty-Briant (Chateaubriand) is well, I hope.

I think I have no more news; only give both our loves

('all three,' says Dash) to Mrs. Patmore, and bid her get quite well, as I am at present, bating qualms, and the grief incident to losing a valuable relation. C. L.

LONDRES, *July* 19, 1827.

ROBERT SOUTHEY TO JOSEPH COTTLE.

20th April 1808.

Do you suppose, Cottle, that I have forgotten those true and essential acts of friendship which you showed me when I stood most in need of them? Your house was my house when I had no other. The very money with which I bought my wedding-ring and paid my marriage fees was supplied by you. It was with your sisters that I left Edith during my six months' absence, and for the six months after my return; it was from you that I received, week by week, the little on which we lived, till I was enabled to live by other means. It is not the settling of a cash account that can cancel obligations like these. You are in the habit of preserving your letters; and if you were not, I would entreat you to preserve this, that it might be seen hereafter. Sure I am, that there never was a more generous or kinder heart than yours; and you will believe me when I add, that there does not live a man upon earth whom I remember with more gratitude and more affection. My heart throbs and my eyes burn with these recollections. Good night, my dear old friend and benefactor, R. S.

REV. SYDNEY SMITH TO LORD JEFFREY.

1818.

MY DEAR JEFFREY,—I am truly obliged by your kindness in inviting Mrs. Sydney and me to come and see you. I know nothing that would give us more pleasure; but poverty, agriculture, children, clerical confinement,

all conspire to put such a pleasure out of my reach. The only holiday I get in the year carries me naturally towards London, to meet my father and brother; however, I will not despair. I mention these things explicitly now, that there may be no occasion to trouble you any more; and this, I dare say you will agree with me, is the better plan. I have received and nearly read *Georgel.*—Ever, my dear friend, yrs. affectionately.

THE SAME TO MRS. MURCHISON.

June 8th, 1837.

ENGAGED, my dear madam, to Sir George Philips, or should have been too happy;—will come in the evening, if possible.

I am surprised that an Archbishop, living in an alluvial country, should be at your table. Are there no bishops among the Silurian rocks?—Ever yours.

Sydney Smith's two jocular epistles may be appropriately followed up by a characteristic letter from the pen of a lamented modern humourist to a friend in New York, on his return from a visit to America, about thirteen years ago,—I refer to William Makepeace Thackeray. It was written partly on board the 'Canada,' and partly after he had reached London:—

On board, last day—May 7, 1856.

MY DEAR OLD ——,—I tell you that writing is just as dismal and disgusting as saying good-bye. I hate it, and but for a sense of duty I wouldn't write at all—confound me if I would. But you know, after a fellow has

been so uncommonly hospitable and kind, and that sort of thing, a fellow ought, you see, to write and tell a fellow that a fellow is very much obliged; and, in a word, you understand. So you made me happy when I was with you, you make me sorry to come away, and you make me happy now when I think what a kind, generous, friendly W. D. R. you are. You have —— back in the Bower of Virtue—you'll fill that jug when (*sic*) one day and drink my health, won't you; And when you come to Europe, you'll come to me, etc.—and my girls, mind, and we'll see if there is not some good claret at 36 Onslow Square. . . . We have had a dreary rough passage—yesterday the hardest blow of all. I have been ill with one of my old intermittent attacks, after which my mouth broke out with an unusually brilliant eruption, and I am going to Liverpool with a beard eight days' long. It is not becoming in its present stage. I have not been sea-sick; but haven't been well a single day. Wine is ojus to me, segars create loathing; couldn't I write something funnier and more cheerful? Perhaps I may when we are fairly into Liverpool; perhaps we may be there to-night, perhaps not till to-morrow morning, for it blew a hurricane in our face last night, and the odds are we shall not have water enough to pass the bar. Home (viz., 36 Onslow Square, Brompton, London), May 9. We did pass the bar, and didn't I have a good dinner at the Adelphi, and wasn't I glad to get back to town yesterday, and wasn't there a great dinner at the Garrick Club (the annual Shakespeare dinner which ought to have come off on the 23d ult., but was put off on account of a naval review), and didn't I make a Yankee speech, and Oh Lor'—haven't I got a headache this morning? I'm ashamed to ask for a sober-water, that's the fact. And so here the old house, the old room, the old teapot by my bedside—the old trees

nodding in at the window—it looks as if I 'd never been away—and that it 's a dream I have been making. Well, in my dream I dreamed that there was an uncommonly good fellow by name W. D. R., and I dreamed that he treated me with all sorts of kindness, and I sent him and J. C. B. P. and D. D. (and what 's his name down-stairs?) my heartiest regards; and when my young women come home, I shall tell them what a deal of kindness their papa had across the water—so good-bye my dear ——, and believe me, always gratefully yours,

W. M. THACKERAY.

Letters in Modern Biographies.

A very interesting feature of some of our best modern biographies—such as Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, and Stanley's *Life of Dr. Arnold*—is the frequent introduction of letters, by means of which the subjects of the memoirs are made to speak for themselves. The best of all biographies—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*—also contains a good many letters from the pen of the great moralist—the comparative brevity of the most of which is explained by the Doctor's avowed objection to the publication of correspondence. 'It is now,' he said, 'become so much the fashion to publish letters, that, in order to avoid it, I put as little into mine as I can.' 'Do what you

will, sir,' replied Boswell, 'you cannot avoid it. Should you even write as ill as you can, your letters would be published as curiosities.' Most of Johnson's letters exhibit traces of the precise and vigorous style which distinguishes his more important writings, and their comparatively formal character presents a striking contrast to the off-hand, easy, familiar correspondence of many other literary men. Even in his most elaborate productions, his great knowledge of men and manners is imperfectly displayed. It has been said that 'his maxims perish under that load of words which was designed for their defence and ornament. But it is clear from the remains of his *conversation*, that he had more of that homely wisdom which nothing but experience and observation can give, than any writer since the time of Swift.'

SAMUEL JOHNSON TO MRS. THRALE.

DEAR MADAM,—Since you have written with the attention and tenderness of ancient time, your letters give me a great part of the pleasure which a life of solitude admits. You will never bestow any share of your good-will on one who deserves better. *Those that have loved longest, love best.* A sudden blaze of kindness may, by a single blast of coldness, be extinguished; but that fondness, which length of time has connected with many cir-

cumstances and occasions, though it may for a while be suppressed by disgust or resentment, with or without a cause, is hourly revived by accidental recollections. To those that have lived long together, everything heard and everything seen recalls some pleasure communicated, or some benefit conferred; some petty quarrel, or some slight endearment. Esteem of great powers, or amiable qualities newly discovered, may embroider a day or a week, but a friendship of twenty years is interwoven with the texture of life. A friend may be often found and lost, but an *old friend* never can be found, and nature has provided that he cannot easily be lost. (*After allusions to the Davenants and Lord Kilmurry:*—) . . . We all know what death should teach us; let us all be diligent to learn. Lucy Porter has lost her brother. But whom I have lost—let me not now remember. Let not your loss be added to the mournful catalogue. Write soon again to, Madam, your, etc., SAM'L JOHNSON.

THE SAME TO THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD.

February 7th, 1755.

MY LORD,—I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of the *World*, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge. When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre;*—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me

to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could, and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little. Seven years, my Lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door, during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before. The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks. Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself. Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation. My Lord, your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

Sir Walter's letters are very pleasant reading, particularly those addressed to the members of

his own family and his more intimate friends; but their great length prevents me from introducing even a single example. The following, however, is a short, playful effusion to his esteemed chief, the Duke of Buccleuch, with reference to a contemplated cattle-show at Bowhill:—

SIR WALTER SCOTT TO THE DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH, ETC. ETC., DRUMLANRIG CASTLE.

MY DEAR LORD DUKE,—I am just honoured with your Grace's of the 27th. The posts, which are as cross as pye-crust, have occasioned some delay. Depend on our attending at Bowhill on the 20th, and staying over the show. I have written to Adam Fergusson, who will come with a whoop and a hollo. So will the Ballantynes—flageolet and all—for the festival, and they shall be housed at Abbotsford. I have an inimitably good songster in the person of Terence Magarth, who teaches my girls. He beats almost all whom I have ever heard attempt Moore's songs, and I can easily cajole him also out to Abbotsford for a day or two. In jest or earnest, I never heard a better singer in a room, though his voice is not quite full enough for a concert; and for an after-supper song, he almost equals Irish Johnstone.

Trade of every kind is recovering, and not a loom idle in Glasgow. The most faithful respects of this family attend the ladies, and all at Drumlanrig. I ever am, your Grace's truly obliged and grateful

WALTER SCOTT.

Given from my Castle of Grawacky,
this second day of the month called
October, one thousand eight hundred and seventeen years.

There is a date nearly as long as the letter! I hope we shall attack the foxes at Bowhill. I will hazard Maida.

The following extract from his letter of condolence to the same Duke[1] on the death of his lovely and amiable partner, written at Glasgow on the 8th of September 1814, is a good specimen of Sir Walter's more serious strain. He thus feelingly expresses himself:—

Would to God I could say, *Be comforted;* but I feel every common topic of consolation must be, for the time at least, even an irritation to affliction. Grieve, then, my dear Lord, or I should say my dear and much honoured friend,—for sorrow for the time levels the highest distinctions of rank; but do not grieve as those who have no hope. I know the last earthly thoughts of the departed sharer of your joys and sorrows must have been for your Grace, and the dear pledges she has left to your care. Do not, for their sake, suffer grief to take that exclusive possession which disclaims care for the living, and is not only useless to the dead, but is what their wishes would have most earnestly deprecated. To time, and to God, whose are both time and eternity, belongs the office of future consolation; it is enough to require from the sufferer under such a dispensation to bear his burthen of sorrow with fortitude, and to resist those feelings which prompt us to believe that that which is galling and grievous is therefore altogether beyond our strength to support.

[1] The father of the present Duke of Buccleuch, his Duchess being the youngest daughter of the first Viscount Sydney.

The Duke's own letter announcing the sad intelligence to the poet, written a few days before Sir Walter's, but not received in due course, is a beautiful illustration of Christian composure. The description of the closing scene is deeply pathetic; and the unselfish resolution with which his Grace concludes is indicative of the noble heart which he possessed.

Except in the case of suicides, there are few examples on record of letters deliberately written in the anticipation of death. The following touching epistle was penned by the lamented Colonel Shadforth, of the 57th Regiment, the evening before the fruitless attack upon the celebrated 'Redan,' on the 18th of June 1855, when he fell along with many other brave companions in arms:—

BEFORE SEBASTOPOL, *June* 17, 9 P.M.

MY OWN BELOVED WIFE AND DEARLY BELOVED CHILDREN,—At one o'clock to-morrow morning I head the 57th to storm the Redan. It is, as I feel, an awfully perilous moment to me, but I place myself in the hands of our gracious God, without whose will a sparrow cannot fall to the ground. I place my whole trust in Him. Should I fall in the performance of my duty, I fully rely in the precious blood of our Saviour, shed for sinners, that I may be saved through Him. Pardon and forgive me, my beloved ones, for anything I may have said or

done to cause you one moment's unhappiness. Unto God I commend my body and soul, which are His; and, should it be His will that I fall in the performance of my duty, in the defence of my Queen and country, I most humbly say, 'Thy will be done.' God bless you and protect you; and my last prayer will be, that He in His infinite goodness may preserve me to you. God ever bless you, my beloved Eliza, and my dearest children, and if we meet not again in this world, may we all meet in the mansion of our Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ. God bless and protect you; and ever believe me, your affectionate husband and loving father,

THOMAS SHADFORTH.

In the letters of Dr. Arnold, we find abundant illustration of that manliness of tone and liberality of sentiment for which he was so remarkably distinguished. His correspondence with the Chevalier Bunsen, Dr. Whately Archbishop of Dublin, Mr. Justice Coleridge, and other eminent men, on the leading questions of the day, is possessed of peculiar interest; but probably the majority of readers derive a still greater amount of gratification from the perusal of the numerous letters which he addressed to old pupils while residing at the Universities or engaged in the active business of life.

Quaint and Pithy Letters.

Apropos to the correspondence of eminent individuals, I may here introduce a few curiously expressed epistles from my own collection of autographs, which embraces a goodly array of the celebrities of the present century; and, of course, an additional amount of interest is attached to them from the circumstance—so far, at least, as I am aware—of their never having been published. Towards the end of the year 1813, the 'Ettrick Shepherd' writes from Edinburgh to his brother William, with reference to his celebrated poem, *The Queen's Wake*, and various other matters:—

THE ETTRICK SHEPHERD TO HIS BROTHER WILLIAM.

EDIN., *Novr.* 28, 1813.

DEAR BROTHER,—I have been very much to blame in not answering your letter, but the truth is that I never write any letters. The one of yours which I received in Athol I cannot lay my hands upon, but I know I objected particularly to the terms *perfect breed* and *perfection of a breed.* I received all my things in the box safe, and I find them of excellent quality. I am sorry I have not got a copy of the *Wake* to you, tho' I sent for one. I send you the *Review* and *Mag.* You shall have a copy of the poem soon. I will see my nephew Robert today, as I am bound to the south. Mr. Gray has a good

letter from you, which I understand he has been reading in all the literary circles of Edinr., to show them, as he says, that the genius of the family is not all concentred in one head. For God's sake, take some thought of your *wases* and *weres*, *has* and *have*, *is* and *are*, etc. Excuse me, my dear William, for, believe me, the writing of a letter is now the greatest penance I suffer.—I am your affectionate brother, JAMES HOGG.

A few years later, Lady Charlotte Bury indites a somewhat comical note to Mr. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, the Horace Walpole of Scotland (from whom I received it), towards the close of which she abruptly substitutes the first for the third person! Lady Charlotte was the daughter of the fifth, and aunt of the eighth and present Duke of Argyll. She was twice married, first to Colonel John Campbell of the family of Shawfield; and secondly (in 1818) to the Rev. Edward Bury:—

LADY CHARLOTTE BURY TO CHARLES KIRKPATRICK SHARPE, ESQUIRE.

No. 6 NEW CAVENDISH STREET,
30*th December* 1826.

LADY CHARLOTTE BURY ventures to request a favour of Mr. Sharpe. If he has not forgotten that such a person is in existence, she hopes she may avail herself of old acquaintanceship; if he has, she can only plead Mr. Sharpe's well-known ability and learning on matters

such as she is about to address him, and trust to his politeness to forgive her.

Lady Charlotte Bury is very anxious to obtain every species of information respecting her family of Argyll —and if Mr. Sharpe will in any way assist her to do this, either by reference or by sending her any papers or documents, she will be very seriously obliged to him. There was a lady of the family who was a poetess—now whether bad or good, Lady C. would give the world for her poetry—but the most trifling circumstances will be all accounted valuable. Accept [the *third* person puzzles me] accept then, I pray, my compts. and good wishes and excuses, and forgive this chambermaid piece of eloquence. CHARLOTTE MARIA BURY.

Although the 'style' of the third person may be found suitable for invitations to dinner and certain other formal communications, there can be no doubt that it proves highly inconvenient when the note extends to any length. In such a case the result is generally far from elegant, and even the most skilful use of the pronouns is productive of ambiguity; *e.g.*, 'Mrs. Smith presents *her* compliments to Mrs. Simpson, and will feel extremely obliged by *her* informing *her* whether *she* could conveniently favour *her* with an interview in the course of to-morrow afternoon, as *she* is anxious to make some inquiries respecting *her* present housekeeper.—18 CAMBRIDGE SQUARE, 20*th November* 1869.' Here

we have no fewer than five *hers*, of which three are applicable to Mrs. Smith and two to Mrs. Simpson; and two *shes* which are equally divided between them.

In the beginning of the year 1834, the genial friend and biographer of Lord Jeffrey pens a highly characteristic epistle to Mr. James Bridges, Writer to the Signet, who at that time held the post of agent for the Edinburgh 'Improvement' Commissioners. Except perhaps Sir Walter Scott, no native of 'Modern Athens' ever loved his 'own romantic town' more dearly, or more ardently desired to preserve its historical memorials, than Henry Cockburn. His natural indignation at the wanton removal of Trinity College Church, 'the finest Gothic fragment in Edinburgh,' must still be fresh in the recollection of his right-thinking fellow-citizens; but it is painful to acknowledge that, in these days of 'enlightened progress,' there are not many shoulders left to wear his chivalric mantle.

7th Janr. 1834.

MY DEAR SIR,—So the Lawnmarket house is at last to come down! You know that I have long had my patriotic eye on the three carved stones which have so long looked down on the last sufferings of my poor

clients below. Do tell the Commissioners to save them from the sale of the materials, which I see advertised for the 17th. They are of no value to any sane man; but very tempting to an idiot like me who has a taste for trash. Besides, I was expressly promised them by Provost Trotter as a bribe. You remember the zeal with which, when they were in the dead-thraw, I helped on these improvements, and I flatter myself that your ears yet ring with the various eloquent speeches I made in their behalf. To the public, this was, and is to remain, all pure public virtue. But, among ourselves, it was all with a view to these three carved stones—what are called by botanists stone pines. If any demur be made about them, I shall plot in the Faculty against the removal of the County Hall. But the Commissioners have too much justice. If any one of them talks of a price, tell him first, that anything so base would destroy the charm; and secondly, that to make up for this, I mean to go and act white-bonnet at the sale of the other materials.

So let the bribe stand.—Yours faithfully,

H. COCKBURN.

When living with a private tutor in Kent some five-and-twenty years ago, we frequently spent a portion of the winter evenings in reading aloud, and in going through one of Campbell's poems, a certain line presented itself, the meaning of which was acknowledged to be extremely doubtful. As I was then very anxious to obtain the author's autograph, I determined to present my compliments and to request him, as politely as possible, to interpret

the words in question; a very cool, if not a slightly impertinent proceeding! In the course of a few weeks, however, after a practical experience of the 'Pleasures of Hope,' I received the following laconic reply:—

LONDON, *14th Dec.* 1840.

SIR,—In return to your note I send you my autograph. THOMAS CAMPBELL.

It has long been a common practice for collectors of autographs to apply to distinguished personages for specimens of their handwriting; and before the abolition of franking, Peers and Members of Parliament were frequently *favoured* with such solicitations. The three following are the replies which I received to applications for their autographs from Dr. Whewell, the late learned Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, Father Mathew the apostle of Temperance, and Miss Eliza Cook. I ought to mention that, in the case of the lady's answer, the handwriting is peculiarly '*perpendicular*' in its character:—

THE REV. DR. WHEWELL.

7 SUFFOLK STREET, PALL MALL,
May 14, 1840.

SIR,—I have received your note, and am, yours autographically, W. WHEWELL.

FATHER MATHEW.

CORK, 5*th July* 1847.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Though painful to my feelings, I cannot refuse compliance with your request. I send the autograph.—I am, dear Sir, yours devotedly,

THEOBALD MATHEW.

On the fly of the letter:—

It is good not to eat flesh, and not to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother is offended, or scandalized, or made weak.—ROM. 14 c. 13, 14 v.

For he shall be great before the Lord, and shall drink no wine, nor strong drink.—ST. LUKE 1 c. 15 v.

MISS ELIZA COOK.

INGRESS ABBEY, GREENHITHE, KENT,
December 7th, 1847.

SIR,—I accede to your request with great pleasure, and am, yours very truly, ELIZA COOK.

(*Over.*)

If 'gentle readers' understand
What human hearts are by the hand,
Just look on this, and when you 've done,
Own mine's a very 'upright' one.

E. C.

These amusing communications remind me of some clever lines in a work entitled *Gathered Leaves* (Virtue, Brothers, and Co., 1865), embracing the poetical effusions of Frank Smedley, author of *Frank Fairlegh*, etc.—

TO MRS. G. H. VIRTUE.

Thou better half of Virtue, gentle friend,
Fairly to thee I, Fairlegh, greeting send;
Frankly I give what frankly you desire;
You thus Frank Fairlegh's autograph acquire.
To make assurance doubly sure, this medley
Of Franks and Fairleghs thus I sign—
FRANK SMEDLEY.

Before leaving this branch of my subject, I may notice three interesting epistles penned far beyond the pale of European civilisation. Shortly after the lamented death of Captain Speke the traveller, His Highness Sured Majid, one of the most influential of the African chiefs, addressed a very touching letter of condolence to his father, which was intrusted to Colonel Playfair, the British Consul at Zanzibar, for transmission to England. It was accompanied by the following English translation:—

In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful. To our distinguished and honoured friend, Mr. Speke, may his glory be perpetuated. May he never cease to be protected from every misfortune, and guarded from every ill afterwards. The reason of our writing this letter is to inquire after your condition. May God avert from us and you every adversity. Secondly, we have heard from the friend of all, Colonel Playfair, consul of the exalted Government, of what has happened to your son, our friend Captain Speke, and our heart is grieved

not a little. May God bestow upon you resignation, and cause good to arise even out of misfortune. This is the way of the world. Anything that you may desire of us, by the assistance of God we shall perform. Peace is the best conclusion. From your friend Majid, son of Suréd, son of Sultan. 4 Regib 1281 (3d December 1864).

In the course of a four years' tour round the world, the vocalists and bell-players, known as the Alleghanians, who visited Edinburgh towards the end of the year 1865, gave several concerts at Otaheite; and on their departure from the capital of the island, they received a letter from Queen Pomare, of which the following is a translation :—

TO THE ALLEGHANIANS.

NOTHING has given me more pleasure than to meet you children of song. Oh, that you might remain upon our fair island álways! But it cannot be; like birds of flight, you are away. God bless you in all your journey through life, singing as you go to the realms of immortality. Adieu! Again, Heaven bless you,

POMARE V.

The last of the three distant epistles already referred to is the celebrated Abyssinian letter to the Queen of England, which Mr. Bernal Osborne declared in the House of Commons was likely to cost the nation the trifling sum of £5,000,000 :—

IN the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, one God in Trinity, chosen by God, King of Kings, Theodoros of Ethiopia, to Her Majesty Victoria, Queen of England.—I hope your Majesty is in good health. By the power of God, I am well. My fathers, the Emperors, having forgotten our Creator, He handed over their kingdom to the Gallas and Turks. But God created me, lifted me out of the dust, and restored this empire to my rule. He endowed me with power, and enabled me to stand in the place of my father. By His power I drove away the Gallas. But for the Turks, I have told them to leave the land of my ancestors. They refuse. I am now going to wrestle with them. Mr. Plowden and my late Grand Chamberlain, the Englishman Bell, used to tell me that there is a great Christian Queen who loves all Christians. When they said to me this, "We are able to make you known to her, and to establish friendship between you," then, in those times, I was very glad. I gave them my love, thinking that I had found your Majesty's good-will. All men are subject to death; and my enemies, thinking to injure me, killed these my friends. But, by the power of God, I have exterminated those enemies, not leaving one alive, although they were of my own family, that I may get, by the power of God, your friendship. I was prevented by the Turks occupying the sea-coast from sending you an embassy when I was in difficulty. Consul Cameron arrived with a letter and presents of friendship. By the power of God, I was very glad hearing of your welfare and being assured of your amity. I have received your presents, and thank you much. I fear that if I send Ambassadors, with presents of amity, by Consul Cameron, they may be arrested by the Turks. And now I wish that you may arrange for the safe passage of my Ambassadors everywhere on the road. I wish to have an

answer to this letter by Consul Cameron, and that he may conduct my embassy in England. See how the Islam oppress the Christian.

The recent death of Mr. Peabody, the American philanthropist, induces me to insert another letter to the Queen, in the shape of that gentleman's reply to Her Majesty's gracious acknowledgment of his munificent gift to the poor of London. The allusions to his prosperous career, and the happiness which he had experienced under Her Majesty's 'benign rule,' are not less felicitous than his well-merited tribute to the Queen's 'sympathy with the humblest of her subjects;' and the concluding reference to 'the kindly feeling of the Queen of the United Kingdom towards a citizen of the United States,' is very pleasingly expressed :—

THE PALACE HOTEL, BUCKINGHAM GATE,
London, April 3, 1868.

MADAME,—I feel sensibly my inability to express in adequate terms the gratification with which I have read the letter which your Majesty has done me the high honour of transmitting by the hands of Earl Russell.

On the occasion which has attracted your Majesty's attention of setting apart a portion of my property to ameliorate the condition and augment the comforts of the poor of London, I have been actuated by a deep sense of gratitude to God, who has blessed me with prosperity, and of attachment to this great country, where,

under your Majesty's benign rule, I have received so much personal kindness, and enjoyed so many years of happiness.

Next to the approval of my own conscience, I shall always prize the assurance which your Majesty's letter conveys to me of the approbation of the Queen of England, whose whole life has attested that her exalted station has in no degree diminished her sympathy with the humblest of her subjects.

The portrait which your Majesty is graciously pleased to bestow on me I shall value as the most precious heirloom that I can leave in the land of my birth, where, together with the letter which your Majesty has addressed to me, it will ever be regarded as an evidence of the kindly feeling of the Queen of the United Kingdom towards a citizen of the United States.

I have the honour to be your Majesty's most obedient servant, GEORGE PEABODY.

To Her Majesty the Queen.

On this side of the Atlantic, however, it is probably more common to associate our American cousins with a special vein of humour than with delicacy of sentiment. Most of the best humourists of America are said to hail from the West; and if their fun is somewhat coarse, it is certainly less strained and more genuine than that of New England. Thus, while California was the cradle of John Phenix and Mark Twain, the 'Rev. Petroleum Nasby' and 'Artemus Ward' both belonged to the State of Ohio. It

is now well known that the real name of 'Artemus' was Charles Browne, whose premature death in the spring of 1867, at the early age of thirty, was very generally deplored. The letters purporting to be written by an itinerant showman, under the name of 'Artemus Ward,' were long believed to be genuine. After the discovery of their true character, the author's popularity was rapidly established; and during the last year of his life, which was passed in England, the warmth of his heart and the geniality of his temper, independently of the eccentricity of his writings, secured for him a troop of ardent admirers. The letter in which he asserts the superiority of 'wax figgers' to the plays of Shakespeare is a very characteristic specimen of his style.

ONTO THE WING,
—— 1859.

MR. EDITOR,—I take my Pen in hand to inform yu that I 'm in good helth and trust these few lines will find yu injoyin the same blessins. I wood also state that I 'm now on the summir kampane. As the Poit sez—

ime erflote, ime erflote,
on the Swift rollin tied,
An fhe Rovir is free.

Bizness is scacely middlin, but Sirs I manige to pay for my foode and raiment puncktooally and without no

grumblin. The barked arrers of slandur has bin leviled at the undersined moren onct sins heze bin into the show bizness, but I make bold to say no man on this footstule kan troothfully say I ever ronged him or eny of his folks. I 'm travelin with a tent, which is better nor hirin hauls. My show konsists of a serious of wax works, snakes, a paneramy kalled a Grand Movin Diarea of the War in the Crymear, komic songs and the Kangeroo, which larst little cuss continners to konduct hisself in the most outrajus stile. I started out with the idear of making my show a grate Moral Entertainment, but I 'm kompeled to sware so much at that air infernul Kangeroo that I 'm frade this desine will be flustratid to some extent. And while speakin of morrality, remines me that sum folks turn up their nosis at shows like mine, sayin they is low and not fit to be patrernized by peple of high degree. Sirs, I manetane that this is infernul nonsense. I manetane that wax figgers is more elevatin than awl the plays ever wroten. Take Shakespeer for instunse, Peple think heze grate things, but I kontend heze quite the reverse to the kontrary. What sort of sense is thare to King Leer who goze round cussin his darters, chawin hay and throin straw at folks, and larfin like a silly old koot and makin a ass of hisself ginerally? Thare's Mrs. Mackbeth—sheze a nise kind of woomon to have round aint she, a puttin old Mack, her husband, up to slaying Dunkan with a cheeze knife, while heze payin a frendly visit to their house. O its hily morral, I spoze, when she larfs wildly and sez, 'gin me the daggurs—Ile let his bowels out,' or words to that effeck—I say, this is awl strickly propper I spoze? That Jack Fawlstarf is likewise a immoral old cuss, take him how ye may, and Hamlick is as crazy as a loon. Thare's Richurd the Three peple think heze grate things, but I look upon him in the lite of a monkster. He kills everybody he takes a noshun to in kold blud,

and then goze to sleep in his tent. Bimeby he wakes up and yells for a hoss so he can go orf and kill sum more peple. If he isent a fit spesserman for the gallers then I shood like to know whare you find um. Thare's Iargo who is more ornery nor pizun. See how shamful he treated that hily respecterble injun gentlemun, Mister Otheller, makin him for to beleeve his wife was two thick with Casheo. Obsarve how Iargo got Casheo drunk as a biled owl on corn whisky in order to karry out his sneekin desines. See how he wurks Mister Otheller's feelins up so that he goze and makes poor Desdemony swaller a piller which cawses her deth. But I must stop. At sum futur time I shall continner my remarks on the dramer in which I shall show the varst supeeriority of wax figgers and snakes over theater plays, in a intellectooal pint of view.—Very Respectively Yures,

A. WARD, T. K.

A few specimens of *pithy* letters may here be introduced. The following quaint application from the queen of James VI. to George Heriot is still preserved among the muniments of the Hospital which bears the worthy jeweller's name :—

GORDG HERRATT,—I ernestlie dissyr youe present to send me tua hundrethe pundes vthe all expedition becaus I man hast me away presentlie. ANNA R.

During our ineffectual attempt to induce the Spaniards to accede to a cessation of arms in the year 1718, a powerful fleet was sent to the

Mediterranean under Sir George Byng, who was ultimately compelled to execute the ample powers with which he had been invested. He accordingly engaged the Spanish squadron near the coast of Sicily, and took seven large ships, while eight others were captured by Captain Walton, who had been detached from the main fleet. The gallant captain sent the following terse announcement of his victory to the Admiral:—

H. M. S. CANTERBURY,
Off Syracuse, August 16, 1718.

To Admiral Sir George Byng.

SIR,—We have taken and destroyed all the Spanish ships and vessels which were upon the coast. The number as per margin.—And I am, etc.,

G. WALTON.

On one occasion, when Sir Walter Scott was in the company of the late Miss Catherine Sinclair, knowing that she was descended through her mother from Alexander, first Lord Macdonald, he began jocularly to disparage the claims of that family, the Macdonalds of Sleat, or *Slate*, as he affected to call them, after an obscure parish in the Isle of Skye. 'Well, Sir Walter,' said Miss Sinclair, 'say what you please, you will always find the slates at the

top of the house!' She then added, 'Did you ever hear of my uncle's reply when Glengarry wrote to say that he could prove himself the chief of the Macdonalds? "My dear Glengarry,—As soon as you can prove yourself to be my chief, I shall be ready to acknowledge you; in the meantime, I am *yours*, MACDONALD."' 'That letter,' exclaimed Sir Walter, 'is the most pointed that I ever heard or read of.'

The letter which the brave and proud Countess of Dorset addressed to the secretary of Charles II., in answer to a communication in which he pressed on her notice a candidate for Appleby, is a characteristic specimen :—

I have been bullied by a usurper, I have been neglected by a Court, but I will not be dictated to by a subject. Your man shan't stand.

ANNE, DORSET, PEMBROKE, AND MONTGOMERY.[1]

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[1] A recent contributor to *Notes and Queries* refers to a silver medal of 'the triple countess,' who thus quaintly describes herself in her own *True Memorial*:—'The colour of mine eyes was black, and the form and aspect of them was quick and lively, like my mother's. The hair of my head was brown and very thick, and so long that it reached to the calf of my legs when I stood upright; with a peak of hair on my forehead, and a dimple on my chin; like my father, full cheeks; and round face like my mother; and an exquisite shape of body, resembling my father. But now time and age have long since ended all those beauties, which are to be compared to the grass of the field.'

Laconic Letters.

Laconic epistles are naturally suggested by quaint and pithy ones. The name of Dorset reminds me of an amusing correspondence between two noble lords—the date of which I am unable to specify—somewhat in the following terms :—

MY DEAR DORSET,—I have just been married, and am the happiest dog alive. (Signed) BERKELEY.

Answer :

MY DEAR BERKELEY,—Every dog has his day!
(Signed) DORSET.

Perhaps I ought to state that my authority for this correspondence is a bachelor of more than seventy summers!

From the same source I have received several other good examples of laconic letters, some of which I shall here introduce :—

A HUSBAND TO HIS WIFE ON SAILING SUDDENLY FOR NORTH AMERICA.

MY DEAR WIFE,—I am going to North America.—Your affectionate husband.

To which she thus replied :

MY DEAR HUSBAND,—I wish you a happy voyage.—Your affectionate wife.

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A young man when at college addressed his uncle, on whose liberality he entirely depended, as follows :—

MY DEAR UNCLE,—Ready for the needful.—Your affectionate nephew.

To which the uncle replied :

MY DEAR NEPHEW,—The needful is not ready.—Your affectionate uncle.

Mr. James Sibbald, editor of the *Chronicles of Scottish Poetry*, was a man of eccentricity and humour. For three or four years he resided in London, without ever letting his Scotch friends know anything of his proceedings, or even where he lived. At last his brother, a Leith merchant, found means to get a letter conveyed to him, the object of which was to inquire into his circumstances, and to ask where he resided. Sibbald sent the following laconic reply :—

DEAR BROTHER,—I live in So-ho, and my business is so-so.—Yours, JAMES SIBBALD.

A young gentleman, on going to sea, was presented with a handsome pocket-Bible by his aunt, who desired him, whenever he was in want, *to look into his Bible.* After being some time from home, he found it necessary to write

to his aunt for a supply of money, and she answered him thus :—

MY DEAR NEPHEW,—Look into your Bible.—Your affectionate aunt.

He wrote to her repeatedly on the same subject, and in still more urgent terms ; but he could never draw from her any other answer than—

MY DEAR NEPHEW,—Look into your Bible.—Your affectionate aunt.

At last the young man returned home in despair ; and on being asked, in reply to his complaints, whether he had looked into his Bible, 'Oh, yes ! every day in the world ; but could the Bible fill an empty purse ?' His aunt then begged him to produce it, and on going to his trunk, she found it in the same corner and in same position as it was when he left, unopened and unread. On taking it up and opening it, she showed him a ten-pound note pinned to one leaf, a twenty-pound to another, a fifty-pound to a third, etc., and observed to the astonished youth, 'My dear nephew, you have looked into your Bible to great purpose !'

In the second series of his recent and most interesting work entitled *Half-hours with the*

best Letter-writers and Autobiographers, Mr. Charles Knight gives an amusing example of laconic correspondence between Samuel Foote, the Aristophanes of his day, and his unfortunate mother.

DEAR SAM,—I am in prison for debt; come and assist your loving mother, E. FOOTE.

Reply:

DEAR MOTHER,—So am I, which prevents his duty being paid to his loving mother by her affectionate son, SAM. FOOTE.

I lately met with a curious account of a courtship on the other side of the Atlantic at the end of the seventeenth century, in which a very brief epistle holds a prominent place. In 1693, the Rev. Stephen Mix made a journey to Northampton in search of a wife. He arrived at the Rev. Solomon Stoddard's, and informed him of the object of his visit. Mr. Stoddard introduced him to his six daughters, and then retired. Addressing Mary, the eldest, Mr. Mix said that he had lately settled at Wethersfield, was desirous of obtaining a wife, and concluded by offering his heart and hand. The blushing damsel replied that so important a proposal

required time for consideration; and accordingly Mr. Mix left the room in order to smoke a pipe with her father, while she took the case to 'avizandum.' On her answer being sent for, she requested further time for consideration, and it was agreed that she should send her answer by letter to Wethersfield. In the course of a few weeks, Mr. Mix received her reply, which was soon followed by the wedding:—

NORTHAMPTON, *3rd Novr.* 1693.
REV. STEPHEN MIX.—*Yes.*—MARY STODDARD.

A certain English nobleman was once so deeply in love with a 'ladye fair' that he resolved to ascertain whether she was willing to become his wife. He happened to meet the object of his affections at a crowded ball, where, however, in consequence of supposed objections on the part of her relatives, or for some other reason, he was unable to dance with her; but in the course of the evening, he contrived to slip a fragment of paper into her hand inscribed with the two words, '*Will you?*' Not many minutes afterwards, he received from her, in a similar manner, an equally brief and perfectly intelligible reply in these words, '*Won't I?*' It may perhaps be questioned whether a Scotch

lawyer would be disposed to regard such an answer as indicative of undoubted consent!

A few years before the death of the Duke of Wellington, a captain in a certain regiment of heavy dragoons, which had been ordered to the Cape, applied to his Grace, as commander-in-chief, for permission to negotiate a transfer to another corps. The Duke merely turned up the corner of the letter, and wrote the three significant words—'Sail or Sell,'—and sent it back to the unfortunate writer.

According to *Punch*, Sir Charles Napier's despatch to the authorities, announcing the capture of Scinde, was cleverly expressed in a single Latin word—to wit, '*Peccavi*' (I have *sinn'd*).

In reply to a touching letter from a lady, announcing the death of her husband, Talleyrand simply wrote:—'Hélas! Madame.' Not very long afterwards, the same lady wrote to inform him that she had married another husband, an officer in the army, for whose promotion she urgently pleaded. On this occasion the statesman's reply was as brief as before:—'Ho, ho! Madame.'

Probably the most laconic correspondence on record, however, is that which took place be-

tween two members of the Society of Friends, most of whom are notorious for the paucity of their words. Brother Smith of Leeds being anxious to ascertain from Brother Brown of Sheffield whether he had any news to communicate, sent him a letter, in the shape of a quarto sheet, bearing nothing but a point of interrogation—? (meaning 'what news?') By return of post, he received a similar sheet in reply, on which *nothing whatever* was written, thus indicating that his intelligence was *Nil!*

Business and Official Letters.

I have already referred to Business Letters as the special branch of correspondence in which the 'ruder sex' are considered to excel. A thoroughly good business letter, however,—like everything else thoroughly good,—is by no means a common production. I remember being very much struck by some remarks of a living author, in his elaborate work on the Conquest of Spanish America, regarding the extreme rarity of *first-rate* men of business, and the various qualifications which they ought to possess, including discretion, tact, knowledge

of character, rapidity of thought and action, *undisplayed* enthusiasm, an ignominious love of details blended with a high power of imagination—a very unusual combination—and an entire absence of vanity. Of course all these valuable characteristics are not absolutely essential in the case of the writer of ordinary business letters, but the absence of some of them would assuredly prove highly inconvenient. 'The first thing necessary in writing letters of business,' says Lord Chesterfield, 'is extreme perspicuity. Every paragraph should be so clear and unambiguous that the dullest fellow in the world may not be able to mistake it, nor be obliged to read it twice in order to understand it.' Accuracy of expression, as contradistinguished from looseness and slovenliness of statement, is of the utmost consequence—not only with the view of saving the time of one's correspondent, but also to prevent what may prove a very serious misunderstanding. I have known many cases of prolonged litigation, which were chiefly owing to some doubtful or equivocal expressions in the course of a business correspondence.

Brevity or conciseness is another essential

quality in a good business letter. While nothing should be omitted that is calculated to explain the nature of the matter at issue, the particulars ought to be succinctly stated, and every superfluous word carefully excluded. Complimentary expressions and figures of speech are altogether out of place, and a business style ought to be distinguished by its plain and simple character. Unnecessary repetitions and the introduction of irrelevant matter are, of course, quite inadmissible. How frequently one receives long prosy epistles of three or four quarto pages, the purport of which might easily have been stated in half a dozen lines! Few sensible men who have had the experience of an extensive business correspondence are chargeable with the blemishes in question.

Not many years ago, in consequence of the advent of a Conservative Administration, it became necessary for the Prime Minister to make arrangements for the appointment of a new Lord High Commissioner to represent Her Majesty in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. It is said that the post was offered to a certain noble Lord, who wrote four quarto pages in reply, setting forth a

variety of reasons against his acceptance, but briefly indicated his willingness to take the office *at the very end of his letter.* The Premier, who was very much engrossed with the subject of Reform, only perused the two first pages of the elaborate epistle, and came to the conclusion that his correspondent wished to *decline* the honour! Application was accordingly made to another nobleman, who appears to have succeeded in saying 'Yes' in a shorter compass, and by whom the duties of the office were most satisfactorily discharged.

In answering a business letter embracing a variety of subjects, and perhaps involving several complicated contingencies, it is very desirable to send an *exhaustive* reply. Many tolerably intelligent persons fail in this respect—either because they do not carefully peruse their correspondents' statements, or because they are deficient in the faculty of analysis. Of course, some letters are of such a character that a satisfactory answer is simply impossible; but where the meaning of the writer is clear, and his queries quite allowable, he is certainly entitled to a business-like reply.

[redacted]letters have been somewhat severely

criticised, and most of us have, no doubt, been amused by the description of 'Barnacles' and the 'Circumlocution Office,' in the graphic pages of Dickens. 'Delay' and 'Evasion' are hard words to hurl against the officers of any public department with reference to their procedure, although, in some instances, it is to be feared that such a charge may be fully justified. 'Red-tape' is another favourite watchword of an ungrateful public. My judgment in the matter will naturally be regarded with suspicion, but I must take leave to say that I believe the evils complained of have been grossly exaggerated, and that the correspondence of most of our public offices has long been conducted in a very creditable manner. I make this statement after fifteen years' experience of official life, during which I have been in pretty frequent communication with most of the principal public departments. As to Delay, an extra pressure of business must sometimes, of course, necessitate the suspension of a reply, but I feel satisfied that promptitude and punctuality are the ordinary characteristics of most of the departments in question. Still less can I admit the more serious charge of

Evasion. Certain formalities of style are, of course, unavoidable; but where a plain and legitimate question is put, a direct and exhaustive answer is usually given, and the convenient services of 'red-tape' are only resorted to in the case of unreasonable and impertinent correspondents.

Love-Letters.

From business and official communications to love-letters is a somewhat violent, but withal a pleasant transition. Speaking of love-letters generally, Moore remarks, in his *Life of Byron*, that 'such effusions are but little suited to the public eye. It is the tendency,' he continues, 'of all strong feeling, from dwelling constantly on the same idea, to be monotonous; and those often-repeated vows and verbal endearments which make the charm of true love-letters to the parties concerned in them, must for ever render even the best of them cloying to others.' This is probably a very accurate description of the large majority of love-letters; but there is a higher class of these productions, in which true affection is touchingly portrayed, and

which the most indifferent 'outsider' regards with some degree of interest. The genuine love-letter, however, in which the heart really speaks, is rarely exposed to the public gaze, and hence the difficulty of producing favourable examples. On the other hand, unfortunately, whole volumes might be filled with those screeds of sickly sentimentalism which so frequently appear in the columns of the newspaper—greatly to the satisfaction of all 'sensational' readers. Witness the published correspondence in the celebrated trial of Madeleine Smith, and in the still more recent case of Longworth *v.* Yelverton.

In the reported actions for breach of promise of marriage, these miserable effusions occupy a very prominent place. It appears to be an established rule that no courtship can be properly conducted without the intervention of love-letters, even where the parties concerned happen to live within a gunshot of each other. This was amusingly illustrated a few years ago in the case of Samuel Dean and Ann Doree—the scene of courtship being Bethnal Green in the great metropolis. The fair plaintiff lived in Wellington Row, and her fa[illegible]less admirer

in Pott Street—both residences being situated within the same postal district. Samuel usually spent five evenings in the week at the house of his prospective father-in-law; and on Sundays the happy pair occupied the same pew in the Independent Chapel of the district. Notwithstanding these favourable circumstances, a steady correspondence was kept up between the two ardent lovers; but, alas! Samuel's promises proved to be 'pie-crusts,' and his cold-hearted desertion resulted in a verdict of £75 damages.

Although in that cold and cautious portion of her Majesty's dominions called Scotland, actions for breach of promise are of comparatively rare occurrence, such cases do occasionally find their way into the Court of Session. So recently, for example, as the summer of 1866, our daily newspapers contained a most elaborate report of one of these unfortunate misunderstandings, embracing several very extraordinary letters from the pen of the faithless suitor, who happened to be a widowed draper, with four children, and a singularly impulsive disposition. The object of his tender feelings was a respectable woman of thirty, the daughter

of a denizen of Modern Athens, but residing in Liverpool when the correspondence commenced. In his first epistle, dated 1st December 1865, the ardent widower modestly, if not very truthfully, refers to the paucity of his words:—'Nature,' he says, 'has been very sparing to me in her gifts, and more particularly in the organ of language she has been uncommonly scrimp.' The object of his communication is then stated in the most business-like manner:—'Well, then,' he proceeds, 'my question is, viz., Have you at the present time an engagement with any man, whereby you have bound yourself for the future to him? . . . My abrupt note may startle you, but believe me when I say that this is no new idea to me, but has been floating in my hazy brain for a pretty long time.' Five days later, after the receipt of a favourable reply, the loving draper thus touchingly expatiates:—'MY DEAR ——,—A thousand thanks, and yet another thousand, for your dear, kind, welcome letter. Upon first reading it, I thought of hieing me off to Liverpool *in propriâ personâ*; but when I had swallowed it twice, its musical and honest ring began to steal sweetly on my ear, like some beautiful lyric, heard for the first time

ere yet its melody has died in the distance, you find yourself thumping and knocking for an *encore;* so, my sweet bird, you must pipe me another song without the excuses which all good singers like to make. . . .' After a good many highly romantic allusions, the letter proceeds more seriously as follows:—'If a heart pure and disinterested, a love which is based upon reason, a life to be devoted and spent for your happiness, be anything to offer, then believe me when I say that I mean to lay all that at your shrine. . . . Send me your carte by return, and enclose with it a dozen of your sweetest kisses! . . .' In the course of little more than a brief fortnight, during which the enthusiastic wooer had visited Liverpool, and presented his lady-love with a fifty-pound note to facilitate the marriage preparations, a sudden and most unaccountable change comes over the spirit of his dream; and in a letter commencing with these chilling words, 'Miss Jane ——,' he coolly informs her that his suit must be considered *at an end,* and thus magnanimously concludes:—'Regarding the fifty-pound note which you got from me to be applied to a particular purpose, of course you

are now aware that that is at an end, and the note ought to have been sent back to me without delay. But to show you that I bear no ill-will, I will deal generously, and allow you to retain ten pounds for your own use, PROVIDED you send me back, within three days, the other forty pounds; but if not done so, I shall hold this offer at an end from that time.'

The only explanation offered at the trial was that the writer of these inconsistent effusions had come to think that the lady was not the right person for him to marry, and that there was an 'incompatibility' betwixt them! Will it be credited when I state that a jury of twelve responsible men—that boasted 'Palladium of British freedom,'—while they returned a unanimous verdict for the lady, assessed the damages, in the teeth of the Judge's charge, at £50, thereby throwing the expenses of the trial on the party who had been so grossly injured—her heartless suitor having previously tendered, through his agent, the magnificent sum of £52, 10s.! Any comment is superfluous. Ladies, Beware!

About eight years ago, some remarkable specimens of *matrimonial* letter-writing were brought

to light, through the medium of the Queen's Bench, in the celebrated case of Mr. and Mrs. Rowley, where, unfortunately, an overbrilliant sunshine was at last displaced by a terrific tornado. It is hard, indeed, to believe (as remarked by a contemporary critic) that the boundless love and affection, indicated by some of the epistles in question, could ever have been extinguished. 'Not a line from you to-day,' writes the Hon. Mrs. Rowley to her absent spouse; 'Not a line from you to-day, you naughty old Dubby! Poor Titty has been very ill to-day. I wish dearest Zooy were here to take care of her. . . . I told her you were such a dear, and how Titty loved you. How I detest to be separated from you, my ducky!' Again, in her next letter, she says, 'And did it write a nice little tiny letter to its wifey this morning! Titty was delighted with it, and kissed it over and over and over again. My darling, dear, dear old pet; thank God! you say there is a chance of your passing your examination. I knew my dearest Zooy's abilities could do anything he took trouble about. . . . Ever believe Titty to remain,' etc.

By way of contrast with the gushing affec-

tion of the English wife, I may introduce a loving epistle, written at a somewhat earlier period, by a Scottish husband, in the person of David Lord Ogilvy, granduncle of the present Earl of Airlie, and one of the most devoted of Prince Charlie's band of loyal followers at the battle of Culloden. The letter, which is undated, was kindly given to me by my friend Dr. Laing, of the Signet Library. It was probably written about the beginning of the year 1747, and the 'angel' to whom it is addressed was Lord Ogilvy's first wife, Margaret, daughter of Sir James Johnstone, Bart., of Westerhall, who died ten years afterwards, at the early age of thirty-three. The penmanship is excellent, and the signature bold and distinctive; but unfortunately only the letter 'Y' remains of the words immediately preceding, which were no doubt expressive of the most unbounded attachment. His Lordship descants as follows:—

My Angel, I aske pardon for troubleing you when I have nothing to say that's worth your while hearcing from the Ports of Cambray, where I cou'd not get in to last night. I have no other design by sending you this Billet but to make me think and dream over your Charms, with which I'm Ass enough to be intoxicate, and for to pray you to write me every day, and to appoint when I

shall come back. I think already every hour has been a month sine (*since*) I left you. My Angel, I have the honour to be, Y . . . . OGILVY.

A My Lady
My Lady Ogilvy,
au Cheval d'Or à Lille.

Even the 'love-letters of eminent persons' are not particularly edifying, if at least we may judge from a volume published under that title in the year 1859, and edited by a gentleman bearing the historical name of Charles Martel. Most of his specimens exhibit that wearisome iteration by which amatory epistles are usually characterized, and thus fully confirm the truth of the Irish poet's estimate already quoted. The editor ventures to hope that his volume may prove useful as a collection of precedents. 'As most persons,' he says, 'feel awkward when they first set about making love, they may welcome an opportunity of acquiring confidence by taking a leaf out of the books of those who have distinguished themselves either in the world of letters or of action!' His examples include excerpts from the correspondence of Swift, Pope, Sterne, Burns, Goeth Nelson, and Napoleon; but, strange to say, in the case of the Dean of St. Patrick's, only his

letters to Varina and Vanessa are introduced, and not even a single specimen of those addressed to Stella, which are usually considered his best, if not his only love-letters.

The style of the love-letters of the beginning of the eighteenth century may be gathered from the imaginary epistles in the novels and essays of that period—more particularly the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. The latter of these also contains several of Steele's actual letters to his future wife, Mary Scurlock, the 'Andromache' of the *Spectator*, which have been well described as 'masterpieces of ardour and respect, of tender passion and honest feeling, of good sense and earnestness, as well as of playful sweetness.' Steele's 'Epistolary Correspondence' is remarkably free from the character of 'Composition Letters,' and that air of solemn declamation which is to be found in most of the familiar letters of Pope and other eminent persons of the eighteenth century.

SIR RICHARD STEELE TO MISS SCURLOCK.

September 25th, 1761.

MADAM,—It is the hardest thing in the world to be in love, and yet attend business. As for me, all that speak to me find me out; and I must lock myself up, or other

people will do it for me. A gentleman asked me this morning, 'What news from Holland?' and I answered, 'She's exquisitely handsome.' Another desired to know when I had been last at Windsor. I replied, 'She designs to go with me.' Prythee, allow me at least to kiss your hand before the appointed day, that my mind may be in some composure. Methinks I could write a volume to you, but all the language on the earth would fail in saying how much, and with what disinterested passion, I am ever yours, etc.

In one of his contributions to the *Tatler*, the author of the preceding effusion inculcates the propriety of being 'as near what you speak face to face as you can,' in the concoction of love-letters; and indicates, as his decided opinion, that writing has lost more mistresses than any one mistake in the whole legend of love. 'When you write to a lady,' he says, 'for whom you have a solid and honourable passion, the great idea you have of her, joined to a quick sense of her absence, fills your mind with a sort of tenderness that gives your language too much the air of complaint, which is seldom successful. For a man may flatter himself as he pleases, but he will find that the women have more understanding in their own affairs than we have, and women of spirit are not to be won by mourners. He that can keep hand-

somely within rules, and support the carriage of a companion to his mistress, is much more likely to prevail than he who lets her see that the whole relish of his life depends upon her. If possible, therefore, divert your mistress rather than sigh for her. The pleasant man she will desire for her own sake; but the languishing lover has nothing to hope from, but her pity.'

Rousseau used to say that to write a good love-letter, you ought to begin without knowing what you mean to say, and to finish without knowing what you have written. Probably a good many lovers act upon this principle; and if their effusions are not always of a very high stamp, they are at least not quite so ridiculous as another well-known class of more laboured epistles, abounding in allusions to flowers and sunshine, and for which, by the way, a writer in the *Saturday Review* has the audacity to say the ladies are chiefly responsible. 'The first thing,' he says, 'that a woman likes when she is being courted, is to be called something like what amateur musicians are always calling one another in duets. She is quite willing to be a bee, or a bird, or a lily; but it is *de rigueur* that she should be either in the ornithological or the

botanical line. It is all very well if the lover happens to have been a little in the duet way too. He can, in this case, understand the feeling, and nerve himself without much difficulty to respond to it. But if he is entirely ignorant about birds and botany, his task becomes more serious. He has the humiliation of being obliged to confine himself entirely to calling his future wife an angel or a goddess, according as he is most addicted to classical or to Christian mythology; while the mortifying thought cannot fail to strike him that both appellations are a little elevated and a little trite.' The same critic considers that in these days of rapid locomotion, love-letters ought to be regarded as an anachronism; and in suggesting the substitution of a *vivâ voce* declaration in the shape of either a personal interview or a serenade, he refers to the celebrated letter of Penelope to her absent lord.[1] As I have already indicated, however, a systematic correspondence seems still to be regarded as part and parcel of every properly conducted courtship, and the facilities afforded by our modern postal arrangements

[1] 'Hanc tua Penelope lento tibi mittit, Ulysse.
Nil mihi rescribas attamen: *ipse veni.*'

are no doubt calculated to extend the practice.

The following serio-comic incident was related a few years ago in a Parisian newspaper:—'In the street of Cherche-Midi there exists a little eating-house, known under the name of *Cabaret de la Mère Rigault*, and much frequented by engravers and sculptors. It is kept by an amiable young widow, who received, a few days ago, from one of her customers, a sculptor, named Auguste R., the following curious letter:—

'"DIVINE PEBBLE,[1]—Were you not harder than porphyry or agate, the chisel of my love, guided by the mallet of my fidelity, would have made some impression upon you. I, who have given every form to the roughest materials, had hoped that with the compass of reason, the saw of constancy, the fine file of friendship, and the polish of my words, I should have made of you one of the prettiest statues in the world. But, alas! you are but an insensible stone; and yet you fire my soul, yourself remaining cold as marble. Have pity on me; I no longer know what I say or do. When I have a dragon to sculpture it is Cupid that rises under my chisel. Dear column of my hopes, pedestal of my happiness, cornice

[1] The commencement of the poor sculptor's letter will no doubt remind the reader of the famous epistle in *Peregrine Pickle* which Tom Pipes procured from the village schoolmaster, beginning with the words, 'Divine Empress of my Soul.'

of my joy, if you make me happy I will raise to you statues and pyramids. To-morrow I will call for your answer.

AUGUSTE."

The widow laughed heartily at what she took for a witty joke, and showed the letter to all her customers. The other day Auguste R. entered the establishment, and was immediately a mark for a shower of compliments on the originality of his letter. Fixing a strange gaze upon his friend, he exclaimed, "You make a jest of my sufferings, of my love!" and, becoming suddenly furious, he abused the widow for her perfidy, and threatened to kill her. The police had to be sent for. The poor sculptor proved to be out of his mind.'

As specimens of love-letters, I may give the two following:—

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF TO MISTRESS PAGE.

(*Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act ii. Sc. 1.)

ASK me no reason why I love you; for though Love use Reason for his physician, he admits him not for his counsellor. You are not young, no more am I; go to then, there's sympathy: you are merry, so am I—ha, ha! then there's more sympathy: you love sack, and so do I; would you desire better sympathy? Let it suffice thee, Mistress Page,—at the least, if the love of a soldier can suffice,—that I love thee. I will not say, pity me; 'tis not a soldierlike phrase; but I say, love me. By me,

Thine own true knight,
By day or night,
Or any kind of light,
With all his might
For thee to fight,

JOHN FALSTAFF.

MRS. M'LEHOSE TO ROBERT BURNS.

Wednesday Morning.

SYLVANDER,—I fancy you and Vulcan are intimates. He has lent you a key which opens Clarinda's heart at pleasure, shows you what is there, and enables you to adapt yourself to every feeling. I believe I shall give over writing to you. Your letters are too much! My way, alas! is hedged in; but had I, like Sylvander, 'the world before me,' I should bid him, if he had a friend that loved me, tell him to write as he does, and 'that would woo me.' Seriously, you are the first letter-writer I ever knew.

Either to-morrow or Friday I shall be happy to see you. On Saturday I am not sure of being alone, or at home. Say which you'll come. Come to tea if you choose; but eight will be an hour less liable to intrusions. You are a consummate flatterer; really my cheeks glow while I read your flights of fancy. I think you see I like it. If I grow affected or conceited, you alone are to blame. Sylvander, some most interesting parts of yours I cannot enter upon at present. I dare not think on the *parting*—on the interval; but I am sure both are ordered for our good.

'Lasting impressions!' Your key might have shown you better. Say, my lover-poet and my friend, what day next month the eternity will end. When you use your key, don't rummage too much, lest you find I am half as

great a fool in the 'tender' as yourself. Farewell! Sylvander. I may sign, for I am already sealed, your friend,

CLARINDA.

From Miss Carpenter's letters to Sir Walter Scott, a few weeks before their marriage in December 1797, it is pleasant to find that a sensible woman can express the intensity of her affection, even at such an interesting period, without indulging in the ludicrous excesses of unnatural sentimentalism. Thus, on the 25th of October, she writes from Carlisle as follows :—

Indeed, Mr. Scott, I am by no means pleased with all the writing. I have told you how much I dislike it and yet you still persist in asking me to write, and that by return of post. O, you really are quite out of your senses. I should not have indulged you in that whim of yours, had you not given me that hint that my silence gives an air of mystery. I have no reason that can detain me in acquainting you that my father and mother were French, of the name Charpentier; he had a place under Government; their residence was at Lyons, where you would find on inquiries that they lived in good repute, and in *very good style*. I had the misfortune of losing my father before I could know the value of such a parent. At his death we were left to the care of Lord Downshire, who was his very great friend; and very soon after, I had the affliction of losing my mother. Our taking the name of Carpenter was on my brother's going to India, to prevent any little difficulties that might have occurred. I hope now you are pleased. Lord D. could have given you every information, as he has been ac-

quainted with all my family. You say you almost love *him;* but until your *almost* comes to a *quite*, I cannot love *you*. Before I conclude this famous epistle, I will give you a little hint—that is, not to put so many *musts* in your letters; it is beginning *rather too soon;* and another thing is, that I take the liberty not to mind them much, but I expect you mind me. You *must* take care of yourself; you *must* think of me, and believe me, yours sincerely, C. C.

Again, the following day:—

I have only a minute before the post goes, to assure you, my dear sir, of the welcome reception of the stranger.[1] The very great likeness to a friend of mine will endear him to me; he shall be my constant companion, but I wish he could give me an answer to a thousand questions I have to make—one in particular, What reason have you for so many fears you express? Have your friends changed? Pray let me know the truth—they perhaps don't like me being *French*. Do write immediately—let it be in better spirits. Et croyez-moi toujours votre sincère C. C.

A few weeks later—about a fortnight before the happy day—she thus expatiates:—

If I could but really believe that my letter gave you only half the pleasure you express, I should almost think, my dearest Scott, that I should get very fond of writing merely for the pleasure to *indulge* you—that is saying a great deal. I hope you are sensible of the compliment I pay you; I don't expect I shall *always* be so pretty behaved. You may depend on me, my dearest

[1] A miniature of Scott.

friend, for fixing as *early* a day as I possibly can ; and if it happens to be not quite so soon as you wish, you must not be angry with me. It is very unlucky you are such a bad housekeeper, as I am no better. I shall try. I hope to have very soon the pleasure of seeing you, and to tell you how much I love you ; but I wish the first fortnight was over. With all my love, and those sort of pretty things, adieu ! CHARLOTTE.

P.S.—Etudiez votre Français. Remember you are to teach me Italian in return, but I shall be but a stupid scholar. *Aimez* Charlotte.

In Southey's Life of the Rev. Dr. Andrew Bell, author of the *Madras System of Education*, there are no fewer than three short letters to the learned divine, from an undecided admirer, *all written on the same day*, which may be given in order to dispel the popular belief that, in matters of the heart, inconstancy is confined to the male sex :—

NO. I.

February 27, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—I have a favour to ask you—If you would accompany me so far as Conjeveram at any time it is your leisure, and there I shall beg of you to perform a solemn ceremony. It is a serious one, indeed. What do you say ? Yes or no is to *marry me.*—Yours obediently.

NO. II.

February 27, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—Upon reflection, I have changed my mind as to what I have wrote you. I beg you will not mention anything about it.—Yours truly.

NO. III.

February 27, 1793.

DEAR SIR,—I thank you for your letter of this morning. Indeed, I have such confidence in you that I am perfectly satisfied. You will think me an odd woman, perhaps, and I confess I am so.—Adieu!—Your most obliged.

Lord Byron's amusing epistle to the Countess of ——, in which he announces the unfortunate marriage that has lately been connected with so much sensational excitement, must close my illustrations of amatory and matrimonial correspondence.

ALBANY, *October 5th*, 1814.

DEAR LADY,— . . . Your recollection and invitation do me great honour; but I am going to 'be married and cannot come.' My intended is 200 miles off, and the moment my business here is arranged, I must set off in a great hurry to be happy. Miss Milbanke is the good-natured person who has undertaken me, and, of course, I am very much in love, and as silly as all single gentlemen must be in that sentimental situation. I have been accepted these three weeks; but when the event will take place I don't exactly know. It depends partly upon lawyers, who are never in a hurry. One can be sure of nothing; but at present there seems to be no other interruption to this intention, which seems as mutual as possible, and now no secret, though I did not tell first, and all our relations are congratulating away to right and left, in the most fatiguing manner. You perhaps know the lady. She is niece to Lady Melbourne, and cousin to Lady Cowper, and others of your acquaintance, and

has no fault, except being a great deal too good for me, and that *I* must pardon if nobody else should. It might have been two years ago, and, if it had, would have saved me a world of trouble. She has employed the interval in refusing about half-a-dozen of my particular friends (as she did me once, by the way), and has taken me at last; for which I am very much obliged to her. I wish it was all well over, for I hate bustle, and there is no marrying without some; and then I must not marry in a black coat, they tell me, and I can't bear a blue one. Pray forgive me for scribbling all this nonsense. You know I must be serious all the rest of my life, and this is a parting piece of buffoonery, which I write with tears in my eyes, expecting to be agitated.—Believe me, most seriously and sincerely, your obliged servant,

BYRON.

Juvenile Correspondence.

Juvenile correspondence—including letters *to* as well as from young persons—constitutes an amusing branch of my subject, and may here be briefly referred to. Although not, of course, possessed of high literary merit, nor remarkable for logical arrangement, the letters of boys and girls are generally at least natural and unrestrained—the unvarnished, outspoken language of warm and open hearts. As their leading characteristics, I may specify the combination of incoherent subjects, sudden and startling

transitions, the capricious use of capital letters, and the total absence of punctuation; to say nothing of the questionable orthography which they pretty frequently exhibit. In the absence of actual examples, I cannot do better than refer to two choice effusions from the pen of Dick Davenal, one of the heroes in *Oswald Cray*, with whom most readers of *Good Words* must be familiar. The two letters in question were respectively addressed to Miss Davenal, the aunt, and Miss Sara Davenal, the cousin, of the youthful writer. The address to the former bore evident marks of care, while that to Sara was scarcely legible. The handwriting of the letters themselves, however, did not correspond with their respective superscriptions. In short, they had been accidentally transposed, and the letter intended exclusively for Sara's eyes fell into the hands of her aunt Bettina! The contrast in the style of the two epistles is very laughable; the one (intended for Sara) being the genuine letter of the light-hearted schoolboy; the other, formal in its tone, and evidently dictated by the master, commencing, 'My dear and respected aunt,' and subscribed, 'Your most sincere and respectful nephew, Richard

John Davenal.' I shall only give a portion of the former.

MASTER DICK DAVENAL TO HIS COUSIN SARA.

DEAR OLD GIRL,—We come home the end of next week, hooray! old Keen was for keeping us till the week after and shouldn't we have turned rusty but it's all fixed now, the 16th is the joyful day and on the 15th we mean to have a bonfire out of bounds, and shouldn't we like to burn up all our books in it! you cant think how sick we are of them. Jopper says he 'd give all his tin for next half if books and studies had never been invented, and I 'm sure I would, I hate learning and that 's the truth and I haven't tried to get on a bit for I know it's of no use trying. Greak's horrid, and our Greak master is an awful stick and keeps us to it till we feel fit to buffet him, its the most hateful bothering languidge you can imagine, and I shall never master a line of it and if it weren't for cribs I should get a caning every day, Latin was bad enougff but greak caps it. We all got into a row which I'll tell you about when I come home and we had our Wednesday and saturday holidays stoped for three weeks, it was all threw the writing-master, a shokking sneck who comes four days a week and found out something and took and told Keen, but we have served him out, we have had some good games this half taking things together, and if we could berry our books and never do another lesson Keens house wouldn't be so bad. Good-buy till next week darling Sara love to Carry and mind you get a jolly lot of mince-pies ready for us. DICK DAVENAL.

P.S.—how's old Betts deafness, its so cold we hope all the ponds will be froze to ice to-morrow.

I cannot resist introducing two other short characteristic examples from *Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy*, one of the Christmas brochures of the author of *Pickwick*, in both of which the all-important subject of school diet is graphically discussed.

MASTER TRELAWNY TO HIS PARENTS.

MY DEAR PAPA,—I hope you are quite well. I ain't. You know I am not greedy, and not so foolish as to expect at school such jolly things as at home. So you must not be angry when I say what I am *obliged* to say, that we can't eat what Mrs. Glumper says is dinner; and as there 's nothing else but slop and a bit of bread, everybody 's starving.—I remain, your dutiful son,

C. S. TRELAWNY.

P.S.—If you don't like to speak to Mrs. Glumper, would you mind asking mamma and Agnes, with my love, to send me a big loaf of bread (with crust and, if possible, browned), that might last a week?

Lieut.-Gen. Trelawny, C.B., K.H.,
Penrhyn Court.

MY DEAR PAPA AND MAMMA,—I hope you are quite well. We ate up the Pie and other Things you so kindly sent, and then began starving again. Rice, and Catterpillars, and what they call Beef-stake Pie but Isn't, *as usual.* I hoped you would have written to Mrs. Glumper, but perhaps you were Afraide. We held a Counsel, and Settled to run away One by One—till the Dinners get better. We drew Lots and it fell to me. I knew you would Aprove, for I heard you once say, about Captain Shurker, that it wasn't honourable to

Back Out. I have my Second-best suit, some linen, my Bible, and Latin Delectus, and a sum of Money which is the Begining of a Fortune. I know what I am Doing —that is, I shall To-morrow,—so I hope you won't be angry, and kiss Mama, and my love to Agnes, and I am your Afectionate Dutiful Son, C. S. TRELAWNY.[1]

The power of being able to write to juveniles in a strain calculated to interest them is, I suspect, possessed by very few of their 'grave and potent' seniors. It implies the capacity of descending from the platform of ordinary thought and feeling, the power of looking at everything in the fresh and hopeful light of our earliest associations, the exercise of a vivid imagination, and the display of boundless sympathy and buoyancy of spirit. The poet Wordsworth, and also the lamented George Wilson, possessed this somewhat uncommon gift. Among the friends made by the latter wherever he went, were little girls of two years old and upwards. 'He was a great favourite with them,' says his biographer, 'and promised to marry

[1] A few years ago, a fond mamma of my acquaintance received a communication from her youngest boy at school, in the following terms :—'DEAR MAMMA,—If you don't come to see me to-morrow, you will find me . . . *dead.* Amen!—Your loving CHARLIE.' The 'Amen' is charming. As the youthful writer still survives, it is to be presumed that his request was duly complied with.

several when they got the height of his stick. The courtship was chiefly carried on by an exchange of valentines each year, and it *did* prove a little inconvenient when the young ladies had come so far to years of discretion as to be found taking private measurements of the stick, by which their fitness for matrimony was to be tested.'

The following are two characteristic specimens from the pens of very different men :—

LORD JEFFREY TO A GRANDCHILD.

CRAIGCROOK, *June 20th*, 1848.

MY SONSY NANCY !—I love you very much, and think very often of your dimples, and your pimples, and your funny little plays, and all your pretty ways ; and I send you my blessing, and wish I were kissing your sweet, rosy lips, or your fat finger tips ; and that you were here, so that I could hear your stammering words from a mouthful of curds ; and a great purple tongue (as broad as it's long) ; and see your round eyes, open wide with surprise, and your wondering look, to find yourself at Craigcrook ! To-morrow is Maggie's *birthday*, and we have built up a great bonfire in honour of it ; and Maggie Rutherfurd (do you remember her at all ?) is coming out to dance round it ; and all the servants are to drink her health, and wish her many happy days with you and Frankie ; and all the mammys and pappys, whether grand or not grand. We are very glad to hear that she and you love each other so well, and are happy in making each other happy ; and that you do not forget dear

Tarley or Frankie when they are out of sight, nor Granny either, or even old Granny pa, who is in most danger of being forgotten, he thinks. . . . All the dogs are very well; and Foxey is mine, and Froggy is Tarley's, and Frankie has taken up with great white Neddy. . . . The donkey sends his compliments to you, and maintains that you are a cousin of his! or a near relation, at all events. . . . Tarley sends her love, and I send mine to you all, though I shall think most of Maggie to-morrow morning, and of you when your birth-morning comes. . . . And so bless you ever and ever, my dear dimply pussie. —Your very loving GRANDPA.[1]

THOMAS HOOD TO MARY ELLIOT.

17 ELM TREE ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD,
Monday, April 1844. . . .

MY DEAR MAY,—I promised you a letter, and here it is. I was sure to remember it; for you are as hard to forget as you are soft to roll down a hill with. What fun it was! only so prickly. I thought I had a porcupine in the one pocket and a hedgehog in the other. The

[1] As a counterpart to the commencement of Jeffrey's bantering effusion, I may give the conclusion of a somewhat similar epistle from the celebrated musician, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, to his cousin:—'I must conclude, but don't think me rude. He who begins must cease, or the world would have no peace. My compliments to every friend, welcome to kiss me without end, for ever and a day, till good sense comes in my way; and a fine kissing that will be, which frightens you as well as me. Adieu, ma chère cousine; I am, I was, I have been—Oh! that I were, would to Heaven I were! I will or shall be, would, could, or should be—what? a blockhead.

W. A. M.'

next time, before we kiss the earth, we will have its face well shaved. Did you ever go to Greenwich fair? I should like to go there with you, for I get no rolling at St. John's Wood. Tom and Fanny only like roll and butter, and as for Mrs. Hood she is rolling in money.

Tell Dunnie that Tom has set his trap in the balcony, and has caught a cold: and tell Jeanie that Fanny has set her foot in the garden, but it has not come up yet. Oh, how I wish it was the season when 'March winds and April showers bring forth *May* flowers!' for then of course you would give me another pretty little nosegay. Besides, it is frosty and foggy weather, which I do not like. The other night, when I came from Stratford, the cold shrivelled me up so, that when I got home I thought I was my own child.

However, I hope we shall all have a merry Christmas. I mean to come in my most ticklesome waistcoat, and to laugh till I grow fat, or at least streaky.' Fanny is to be allowed a glass of wine; Tom's mouth is to have a *hole* holiday, and Mrs. Hood is to sit up to supper! There will be doings! And then such good things to eat; but, pray, pray, pray, mind they don't boil the baby by mistake for a *plump* pudding instead of a plum one.

Give my love to everybody, from yourself down to Willy, with which and a kiss, I remain, up hill and down dale, your affectionate lover, THOMAS HOOD.[1]

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[1] The above and three other letters were written to three of Dr. Elliot's children, special favourites of Hood's, and they all prove how admirably he could adapt his style to children. The allusion at the commencement of the letter is to an accidental tumble and roll at a pic-nic, ending in a furze bush at the bottom of the bank.

Letters of the Commonalty.

Hitherto my remarks have been almost exclusively confined to the correspondence of educated persons. The less elaborate, though not less hearty effusions of the humbler classes of society, must not be passed over in silence. Until a comparatively recent period, the practice of letter-writing was rarely indulged in by our poorer brethren; but the gradual extension of education, and the vast reduction in the rates of postage, as well as in the price of paper and other requisite materials, have already been productive of a large increase in their correspondence. The touching simplicity and warmth of affection so frequently displayed in the letters received from emigrants to distant lands, which occasionally find their way into the public prints, cannot fail to interest the most callous reader. Reference to the mutual health of the parties constitutes one of the most prominent features of the correspondence under consideration, and the style usually adopted forcibly reminds us of the classical *prœloquium* already referred to. 'I write these few lines to say that I *hop* you are well, as this, thank God!

leaves us at preasant'—a very creditable translation of 'Si vales, gaudeo; ego valeo.' Perhaps the most objectionable characteristic of these unpretending epistles is the superfluous statement with which they almost invariably close: 'No more at present, but remains, etc.' It must be frankly acknowledged, however, that a stereotyped conclusion is by no means an unusual feature in letters of a more ambitious kind.

In her well-known work entitled *English Hearts and English Hands*, Miss Marsh introduces a number of characteristic letters which she received from some of the 'navvies' employed at the erection of the Crystal Palace (in whose welfare she had taken a warm and active interest), after they had joined the ranks of the British Army on the eve of the Crimean War. She explains, in her Preface, that in the first instance these letters were sent to press untouched; but on further consideration it was deemed due to the surviving writers to correct mis-spelt words, 'leaving all else intact.'

The following letter, addressed by a sailor to his brother, is a charming specimen of the 'rough and ready' style. The determined

manner in which the writer sticks to the main point of his epistle is highly amusing :—

WARREN HASTINGS, EAST INDIAMAN,
Off Gravesend, 24th March.

DEAR BRO' TOM,—This cums hopeing to find you in good helth as it leaves me safe ankord here yesterday at 4 P.M. arter a plesent vyage tolerable short and few squalls. Dear Tom, hopes to find poor old father stout, am quite out of pigtail. Sights of pigtail at Gravesend, but unfortinly not fit for a dog to chor. Dear Tom, captain's boy will bring you this, and put pigtail in his pocket when bort. Best in London at the blackboy 7 diles, where go, ax for best pigtail, pound a pigtail will do. And am short of shirts. Dear Tom, as for shirts onley took 2, whereof 1 is quite wore out and t'other most, but don't forget the pigtail, as I arnt had nere a quid to chor never sins Thursday. Dear Tom as for the shirts your size will do only longer. I liks um long, got one at present, best at Tower hill and cheap, but be pertickler to go to 7 diles for the pigtail at the blackboy and Dear Tom ax for a pound of best pigtail and let it be good. Captain's boy will put the pigtail in his pocket, *he likes pigtail so tie it up.* Dear Tom shall be up about Monday or there abouts. Not so perticler for the shirts as the present can be washed, but don't forget the pigtail without fail, so am your lovein brother, JACK.

P.S.—Don't forget the pigtail.[1]

Numerous letters are received in the public department with which I am connected from persons in humble life, usually in the form of applications for extracts of births, deaths, or

[1] See Appendix No. IV.

marriages. Not a few of these are curiosities in their way; and it sometimes requires a good deal of ingenuity to discover the precise object of the 'unlettered' writers. The following may be given as an example of what is not a very common occurrence, to wit, a man deliberately writing to announce his own death and burial! It was probably presumed that the object of the 'Pensioneer' was to procure a certificate of his *son's* death; and the mysterious communication was doubtless answered accordingly:—

TO THE REGISTRAR-GENERAL.

M— *May* 16/65.

SIR,—This is iform you that I Henry D— Pensioneer M— the Farther of Thomas D— of Edinbourgh Died on the 19th April 1865 and Burred on the 23 and the Effects that belongs to Me as I am the nearest Heir to him when alive I have sent you all information as I am his Farther Please to send me answer by returne of Post by so doing you Oble.

B. Direct for Henry D—
Back Lane East M— Pensioneer.

If the art of letter-writing is now an all but universal accomplishment, no less universal is the patronage of photographic portraiture, in the shape of cartes-de-visite; and it is impossible to pass through the smallest country town without one's attention being arrested by a

prominent frame filled with a perfect gallery of local celebrities, in every rank of life. About three years ago, I happened to come across a very solicitous epistle from a Midlothian farm-servant to a well-known photographer in the Scottish metropolis, which appears to be worthy of a place in these pages :—

M— MAINS,
Mr. t—. *Abriel 26th*, 1865.

DARE SIR,—i write to you in order to see if you are going to Send my cards devisit or not for there is kno excuse for dull wether this mounth back for it has ben Good wether for other People geting theres doun so if you intend to get my wones reddy sends them to me as quick as posoble for i have looked for them this last mounth or if you dont send my cards you mus send the money for i have wated till i can wate no longer and if you dont send eathere the wone or the other i (*then follows a full stop*). so i will look for a ansure this week so i close and ramain your truelay JOHN M—.

The following epistle addressed by a West Highland tenant to his landlord's chamberlain, is a very amusing specimen of Celtic indignation. In order to be thoroughly appreciated, it requires to be read with that peculiar nasal intonation by which the large majority of our countrymen to the north of the Clyde and the Tay are more or less distinguished :—

B—, 30*th July* 1853.

HONOURED SIR,—I had Great Cause to Build My mind Upon Your Word in any thing you Would promish me and still Rely on The same Untill you Deny the promish To me of The half of The Widows Lot Now if you have Given It to that Subtil Hypocrite D— N— Who has Been an Usurping tyrant All his Days feathering his nest At other Peoples Coat tails and The Greedy Giddy Gatherlage his Son in Law after They took Pocession at S— Cut peats and Sent Part of Their Stock there But They are Both able Enough to Butter The Roughest Lyes polish it to Smooth Truth To any Unacquainted Person and if it be the case that they Got it this Farm shall never be in peace with Them And They may Well Brag and Vaunt as They were all The Season That They had The factor Under Their Lee bow To Give Them any Thing They would Demand Besides it will open a Door for All maner of Bad vices among them They are not fit To occupy Both at S— and B— The Upshot will be a Subset among them That will Encourage others The people of M— had a great Disgust at them And the people of 5 peny B— if they come among them shall Never have peace with Them If I had gotten The Denyal at first I would think it no Disapointment But now I shall Conclude In the holy Psalmists Words That Blessed is He that Doth the Poor man's Case Consither

And with Due Respects Remains Your Honour's Obt. Servt. D— M—.

J. M— M—, Esq.
Chamberlain of L—.

While on the subject of indignant letters, I embrace the opportunity of tendering a word of

advice to those of my readers who may ever happen to be placed in the unpleasant position of either receiving or having to indite an angry effusion. In many instances, the 'golden' course after the receipt of a fiery communication is to take no notice of it; but if an answer should be considered necessary, it is generally desirable not to write by return of post. A few hours of cool reflection has a wonderful effect in modifying the intensity of the first impressions, and in the large majority of cases, the most prudent course is to bottle up a considerable amount of one's original dudgeon. We know from the highest authority that, whether verbal or written, 'a soft answer turneth away wrath.'

Epistolary Blemishes.

A very sudden termination, without the slightest warning, is in great favour with a certain class of correspondents, the most important announcement being immediately followed by the writer's signature. Others, again, endeavour to account for an abrupt close by excusing themselves on the score of being 'in haste to

catch the post,' while a very frequent mode of wind-up consists of a humble apology for 'this hurried scrawl.' The most common of all conclusions, however, embraces a series of affectionate messages in the shape of 'kind regards' or 'best wishes' to Tom, Dick, and Harry, or to 'the family circle;' and in the case of some very generous correspondents, every known relative of the recipient, both direct and collateral, is favoured with a distinct portion of the writer's love! In addition to their many other good qualities, the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, to which I have already referred, are remarkable for the great variety of style with which they close, as well as for the graceful and pleasing manner in which the writer usually slides into the concluding assurance of her faithfulness or affection.

While speaking of stereotyped and commonplace conclusions, I may briefly refer to one or two other blemishes of pretty frequent occurrence, and of a still more objectionable kind. As a topic of *conversation*, particularly among comparative strangers, the state of the weather is universally acknowledged to be invaluable, furnishing as it does a safe and prudent intro-

duction to more special subjects. The same may be said of all the ordinary events of nature, such as the appearance of the first snowdrop, or the fall of the leaf; but incessant allusion to these matters in the course of a friendly correspondence is very far from edifying. However much interested the recipient of a letter may feel in the meteorological conditions of his own immediate neighbourhood, he is, in most cases, comparatively indifferent respecting the amount of rain or sunshine, or of heat or cold, experienced by his correspondent in some distant part of the kingdom.

Other topics besides the state of the weather are very much out of place in epistolary commerce. As Addison truly remarks, in the *Tatler*, 'to desire to know how Damon goes on with his courtship to Sylvia, or how the wine tastes at the Old Devil,[1] are threadbare subjects,

[1] If wine is not a very edifying subject for correspondence, as a perpetual topic of *conversation* it is even more repulsive to all who possess even the average amount of brains. In these abstemious days, when a long sederunt at the dinner-table is quite a rare occurrence, the tiresome discussion of vintages still constitutes a very common occupation; and the most fluent prosers on the subject are not unfrequently shallow pretenders, who, if blindfolded, could hardly tell the difference between port, claret, and burgundy.

and cold treats, which our absent friends might have given us without going out of town for them. 'A friend of mine,' he continues, 'who went to travel, used me far otherwise; for he gave me a prospect of the place, or an account of the people, from every country through which he passed.' He then introduces the following characteristic specimen of his friend's graphic power :—

DEAR SIR,—I believe this is the first letter that was ever sent you from the middle region, where I am at this present writing. Not to keep you in suspense, it comes to you from the top of the highest mountain in Switzerland, where I am now shivering among the eternal frosts and snows. I can scarce forbear dating it in December, though they call it the first of August at the bottom of the mountain. I assure you, I can hardly keep my ink from freezing in the middle of the dog-days. I am here entertained with the prettiest variety of snow-prospects that you can imagine; and have several pits of it before me, that are very near as old as the mountain itself; for in this country it is as lasting as marble. I am now upon a spot of it which they tell me fell about the reign of Charlemagne or King Pepin. The inhabitants of the country are as great curiosities as the country itself. They generally hire themselves out in their youth, and if they are musquet-proof, until about fifty, they bring home the money they have got, and the limbs they have left, to pass the rest of their time among their native mountains. One of the gentlemen of the place, who has come off with the loss of an eye only, told me, by way of

boast, that there were now seven wooden legs in his family; and that for these four generations, there had not been one in his line that carried a whole body with him to the grave. I believe you will think the style of this letter a little extraordinary; but the rehearsal will tell you that people in clouds must not be confined to speak sense; and I hope we that are above them may claim the same privilege.—Wherever I am, I shall always be, sir, your most obedient, most humble servant.

A vast amount of pleasure, and even of positive benefit, may unquestionably be derived from the interchange of familiar letters. During the first thirty years of the present century, an interesting correspondence, published in 1834, was carried on between Dr. Jebb, Bishop of Limerick, and his friend Mr. Alexander Knox. In the introduction to his new edition of *Burnet's Lives*, the Bishop refers in strong language to the many energetic truths, pregnant principles, and happy illustrations, for which he was primarily indebted to the 'ever-salient mind of Alexander Knox;' while the editor of the correspondence quotes a statement by Knox indicative of the value which he placed upon the Bishop's communications. 'I keep all Mr. Jebb's letters,' he said, 'for I know no such letter-writer in the English language. Every letter of his is

fit to pass, without correction, from the post-office into the printer's hands.' In one of Jebb's letters to Knox, in 1805, he says, 'Your letter was a cordial to me, and has actually contributed more to support me through a day of illness than you can, perhaps, well conceive. Will not this be a stimulus to you to write often, though it be but half a page? My temperament is such that a little sound wisdom, thrown in at a needful time, cheers my spirits far more than anything which society can afford. Happy as I am in conversing with you, I doubt whether, in the hour of nervous depression, a letter from you would not tend more to calm and compose my mind than even a whole day of actual conversation with you.'

Another frequent blemish, of a very different character from those already referred to, is what may be termed the verbose or exaggerated style, in which adjectives and adverbs are most profusely and unmeaningly introduced. Letters of this complexion hardly ever proceed from the pens of the humbler grades of society. They are almost entirely the productions of a certain class of young ladies, who believe that they are possessed of a romantic turn of mind,

and whose favourite occupation consists in the perusal of 'sensational' novels.

A favourite author refers to the underlining of words as a common practice among female letter-writers. 'Their consciousness of no-meaning,' he says, 'worries them so, that the meaning, which, they are aware, is not in any words they can use, they try to put into them by scoring them like a leg of pork, which their letters now and then much resemble!' He acknowledges, however, that the practice is not confined to the ladies, and that it is frequently indulged in by certain men of vigorous minds—particularly soldiers and men of science—who are more conversant with things than with words, and who have never studied composition as an art. 'In good prose,' says Frederick Schlegel, 'every word should be underlined;' 'that is,' continues Archdeacon Hare, 'every word should be the right word, and then no word would be righter than another. We never meet with italics in Plato or Cicero, or indeed in any of the Greek and Roman writers.' A still more aggravating practice is the underlining of the *wrong* words, in which some thoughtless correspondents—both male and female—

are inclined to indulge. In like manner, many a public speaker, on the platform, in the pulpit, and at the bar, loses a large amount of force by the positively painful habit of accentuating the wrong words. On a hearer with any pretension to culture, such a style of delivery produces the same agreeable sensation as a favourite air played or sung out of tune on a musician with an exquisite ear!

Letters, as well as compositions of a more elaborate kind, are often deformed by the continual occurrence of very long sentences. It has been remarked that long sentences form a striking feature in the writings of Sir William Temple, whose style is usually acknowledged to be singularly lucid and melodious; but in his case, as has been said, it will be found, upon close examination, that 'they are not swollen by parenthetical matter, that their structure is scarcely ever intricate, that they are formed merely by accumulation, and that, by the simple process of now and then leaving out a conjunction, and now and then substituting a full stop for a semicolon, they might, without any alteration in the order of the words, be broken up into very short periods, with no sacri-

fice except that of euphony.'[1] I fear, however, that in the cases which I have in view, the most charitable critic would be unable to give any such explanation of the defect in question. Probably the most common offenders are either imperfectly educated or very juvenile correspondents (already referred to), whose epistles not unfrequently consist of a single sentence, embracing a large number of the most heterogeneous subjects. But many letters of a more pretentious kind present examples of the same objectionable feature; and I hope the ladies will excuse me when I take the liberty of stating that their epistolary productions would, in many instances, be materially improved by a more sparing use of conjunctions on the one hand, and a more liberal allowance of full stops on the other.

In ordinary correspondence, too much attention may, of course, be paid to punctuation; and occasionally one meets with a letter in which the writer's anxiety about the stops amounts to something very like pedantry. *Ex-*

[1] The reader will probably smile when he gets to the end of this sentence, for the length of which, however, I am not mainly responsible.

empli gratiâ, I have in my collection of autographs a note from a popular living poet to a mutual friend, in the shape of an acceptance of an invitation to dinner, to the following effect:—

DEAR MRS. P—,—We shall be very happy. This evening, then, at seven, Mrs. F—, I, and a daughter, will duly appear at your house.—Truly yours, A. B. F.

How such an effusion would have horrified Sarah Jennings, the eccentric Duchess of Marlborough, who is said to have systematically neglected the dotting of her *i-s* and the stroking of her *t-s* to save ink!

The last blemish to which I shall venture to allude is the provoking practice, in which some letter-writers indulge, of categorically repeating, in their correspondent's own words, every question propounded before proceeding to furnish a reply. This is said to be a frequent characteristic of a lawyer's letter; and in communications of a strictly business kind, such a mode of treatment is probably better calculated than any other to prevent misunderstandings. But in a familiar correspondence between two intimate friends it is altogether out of place.

Dr. Johnson, in the *Rambler*, makes some very sensible observations on the importance of

cultivating a good epistolary style; and appears to consider that our own countrymen have been surpassed by the French in that branch of composition. 'As letters,' he says, 'are written on all subjects, in all states of mind, they cannot be properly reduced to settled rules, or described by any single characteristic; and we may safely disentangle our minds from critical embarrassments, by determining that a letter has no peculiarity but its form, and that nothing is to be refused admission, which would be proper in any other method of treating the same subject. The qualities of the epistolary style most frequently required are ease and simplicity, an even flow of unlaboured diction, and an artless arrangement of obvious sentiments. But these directions are no sooner applied to use, than their scantiness and imperfection become evident. Letters are written to the great and to the mean, to the learned and the ignorant, at rest and in distress, in sport and in passion. Nothing can be more improper than ease and laxity of expression, when the importance of the subject impresses solicitude, or the dignity of the person exacts reverence.

'That letters should be written with strict

conformity to nature is true, because nothing but conformity to nature can make any composition beautiful or just. But it is natural to depart from familiarity of language upon occasions not familiar. Whatever elevates the sentiments will consequently raise the expression; whatever fills us with hope or terror, will produce some perturbation of images, and some figurative distortions of phrase. Wherever we are studious to please, we are afraid of trusting our first thoughts, and endeavour to recommend our opinion by studied ornaments, accuracy of method, and elegance of style. . . . The purpose for which letters are written when no intelligence is communicated, or business transacted, is to preserve in the minds of the absent either love or esteem; to excite love we must impart pleasure, and to raise esteem we must discover abilities. Pleasure will generally be given, as abilities are displayed by scenes of imagery, points of conceit, unexpected sallies, and artful compliments. Trifles always require exuberance of ornament; the building which has no strength can be valued only for the grace of its decorations. The pebble must be polished with care, which hopes

to be valued as a diamond; and words ought surely to be laboured, when they are intended to stand for things.'

Not less sound are the directions on the subject of letter-writing which are given by Lord Collingwood,—himself an admirable letter-writer,—in a communication addressed to one of his daughters, dated July 1809:—'When you write a letter,' he says, 'give it your greatest care, that it may be as perfect in all its parts as you can make it. Let the subject be sense, expressed in the most plain, intelligible, and elegant manner that you are capable of. If in a familiar epistle you should be playful and jocular, guard carefully that your wit be not sharp, so as to give pain to any person; and before you write a sentence, examine it, even the words of which it is composed, that there be nothing vulgar or inelegant in them. Remember, my dear, that your letter is a picture of your brains; and those whose brains are a compound of folly, nonsense, and impertinence, are to blame to exhibit them to the contempt of the world, or the pity of their friends. To write a letter with negligence, without proper stops, with crooked lines, and great flourishing

dashes, is inelegant; it argues either great ignorance of what is proper, or great indifference towards the person to whom it is addressed, and is consequently disrespectful. It makes no amends to add an apology for having scrawled a sheet of paper; or bad pens, for you should mend them; or want of time, for nothing is more important to you, or to which your time can more properly be devoted. I think I can know the character of a lady pretty nearly by her handwriting. The dashers are all impudent, however they may conceal it from themselves or others; and the scribblers flatter themselves with the vain hope, that, as their letter cannot be read, it may be mistaken for sense.'

Begging-Letters.

Among other curious characteristics of modern times, most persons must have been struck by the vast number of begging-letters which find their way into the hands of a sympathizing public; and of late years it would appear that the fabrication of these documents has become a regular branch of

business.[1] Although invariably cast aside by every one who pretends to possess the smallest amount of common sense, in many instances, unfortunately, they attain their unworthy object, and thus the evil is steadily perpetuated. Usually characterized by an utter disregard of logic, grammar, and orthography, they are sometimes very skilfully put together; and, from time to time, very elaborate examples are quoted in the public prints. It has been alleged that the most frequent recipients of begging-letters are ladies and clergymen,[2] in consequence of their being generally regarded as more compassionate and tender-hearted than unsentimental, cold, cast-iron men of the world. Sterne takes the same view of the

[1] During the year 1867, upwards of 2000 begging-letters were investigated by the 'Mendicity Society,' Red Lion Square, London, of which more than one half were found to be undeserving of notice.

[2] A late legal friend,—a shrewd observer of human nature,—systematically disregarded all testimonials as to character and qualifications granted by clergymen, whose certificates he considered far too laudatory to be consistent with truth. There can be no doubt that many others besides clergymen are too much disposed, in writing such documents, to over-estimate the good, and to overlook the bad points of the parties to whom they relate; and accordingly the testimonial system is now beginning to be very generally distrusted.

ladies; but Dr. Johnson is of a directly opposite opinion. 'A beggar in the street,' he says, 'will more readily ask alms from a *man*, though there should be no marks of wealth in his appearance, than from even a well-dressed woman;' which he accounted for by the great degree of carefulness as to money that is to be found in the female sex. One of the most common forms of application is to send a book, print, or other article, with an earnest solicitation that it may be purchased for the benefit of the writer; which failing, it is delicately suggested that a few postage-stamps may be transmitted along with the proffered enclosure, to defray the cost of circulars. Even if this modest proposal should not be complied with, it is requested that the circular itself may be returned, with the view of its being sent to some other person! The following is a choice specimen of a comparatively recent production in the begging line, copied from the columns of a weekly journal:—

SIR,—At the suggestion of a friend, I sent my book and sermons, and if you could send anything for them, or obtain any subscribers, I should feel deeply grateful; for through having expended all my time and means upon the gratuitous delivery of my sermons and lectures in the

hope of doing good, I am left without a shilling. Unless I can immediately meet a £10 bill to finish paying for the printing, I shall be ruined. The thought makes me *so* ill I can scarcely write.

If you could in the smallest degree assist me in this my great extremity of need, I should feel so thankful, and shortly repay you, for then brighter days would dawn upon me. I entreat you to grant my request, or a debtors' prison awaits me, and the disgrace would kill me. God grant that you may not refuse me, and may his blessing rest upon you and all dear to you, prays yours truly, De——.

28 —— STREET, ——, S.W.
19*th December* 1861.

Oh! save me from the sad fate that awaits me.

As an example of a different style, I may also give an extract from an epistle addressed to a nobleman by a distressed usher upwards of twenty years ago, in which the writer mentions, among other particulars connected with his early history, that he was 'educated either for a clergyman, an officer of marines, or a cadet in the E.I. Company's service!' He then proceeds to make a very touching statement:—

An early marriage, at Gretna Green, irrevocably estranged my relations from me, blasted all my prospects in life, and doomed me, before I was eighteen years of age, to become a teacher of youth, in which capacity, on the small salary of a school-assistant, I have had to contend with the serious cares of rearing fourteen children, the

eight youngest of whom, with their poor mother, who has been a cripple from the painful effects of rheumatism, are still dependent upon me for support. . . . Twenty years ago, my Lord, there were in this part of the country, about twenty-four boarding-schools; but they have all disappeared except five, and those, also, are waning. In one of those five, to which the publication of *Nicholas Nickleby* appears to have given the *coup-de-grace*, I was engaged more than seventeen years; but my services are no longer wanted.

The following graphic description of the ideal begging-letter writer is from the pen of Charles Dickens:—

The natural phenomena of which he has been the victim are of a most astounding nature. He has had two children who have never grown up: who have never had anything to cover them at night; who have been continually driving him mad by asking in vain for food; who have never come out of fevers and measles (which, I suppose, has accounted for his fuming his letters with tobacco-smoke, as a disinfectant); who have never changed in the least degree through fourteen long revolving years. As to his wife, what that suffering woman has undergone, nobody knows. She has always been in an interesting situation through the same long period, and has never been confined yet. His devotion to her has been unceasing. He has never cared for himself; *he* could have perished—he would rather, in short—but was it not his Christian duty as a man, a husband, and a father, to write begging-letters when he looked at her? (He has usually remarked that he would call in the evening for an answer to this question.)

He has been the sport of the strangest misfortunes.

What his brother has done to him would have broken anybody else's heart. His brother went into business with him, and ran away with the money; his brother got him to be security for an immense sum, and left him to pay it; his brother would have given him employment to the tune of hundreds a year, if he would have consented to write letters on a Sunday; his brother enunciated principles incompatible with his religious views, and he could not (in consequence) permit his brother to provide for him. His landlord has never shown a spark of human feeling. When he put in that execution I don't know, but he has never taken it out. The broker's man has grown grey in possession. They will have to bury him some day.

Once he wrote me rather a special letter, proposing relief in kind. He had got into a little trouble by leaving parcels of mud done up in brown paper, at people's houses, on pretence of being a railway-porter, in which character he received carriage-money. This sportive fancy he expiated in the House of Correction. Not long after his release, and on a Sunday morning, he called with a letter (having first dusted himself all over), in which he gave me to understand that, being resolved to earn an honest livelihood, he had been travelling about the country with a cart of crockery. That he had been doing pretty well until the day before, when his horse had dropped down dead near Chatham, in Kent. That this had reduced him to the unpleasant necessity of getting into the shafts himself, and drawing the cart of crockery to London—a somewhat exhausting pull of thirty miles. That he did not venture to ask again for money; but that if I would have the goodness *to leave him out a donkey*, he would call for the animal before breakfast!'

The science of epistolary fraud has very lately

reached an alarming point of refinement in the doings of a consummate villain on the other side of the Atlantic, bearing the name of Sprague. Not content with deceiving the living, in accordance with the practice of the ordinary impostor, this accomplished scoundrel has, for years, been successfully assaulting the reputation of the dead. His diabolical course of procedure appears to have been to watch the announcements of death in the obituary of the *Times*, and to appeal to the susceptibilities of widows and executors by transmitting a fictitious application for assistance, addressed to the deceased, in behalf of an alleged illegitimate child or a betrayed victim. His letters are said to have been so skilfully concocted that, in numerous instances, his nefarious scheme proved completely successful; but it is consoling to learn that, through the combined energy of an English gentleman and an American detective, Mr. Sprague is now enjoying a little leisure within the walls of a Philadelphia prison.

Guides to Letter-Writing.

The reduction of thought and labour to a minimum appears to be one of the grand

objects of this luxurious age. Baby-jumpers and perambulators, copying-presses and pen and pencil menders, needle-threaders and sewing-machines, and a host of other modern inventions, are certainly very wonderful in their way; but perhaps the most remarkable productions of recent times are the numerous Guides to the art of Letter-writing, which we so frequently encounter among the 'announcements' of enterprising publishers. Time was, when the chief object of a letter-writer was to express his actual thoughts and feelings; but in these enlightened days, the nuisance of having either to think or to feel is materially modified, if not entirely removed, by these useful manuals, which furnish forms for almost every conceivable style of epistolary communication.[1] Parents and children, brothers and sisters, masters and servants, tutors and governesses, lovers and friends, landlords and tenants, tradesmen and customers, are all amply provided for by means of real or imaginary models, of which some may be transcribed *verbatim*, while others require to be

[1] For the purport of some of my observations on Guides to the Art of Letter-writing, I am indebted to an amusing article in the *Saturday Review*.

more or less adapted to meet the circumstances of the writer. Of course, a really good compendium aims at furnishing materials for a large number of different cases, and sometimes a series of answers are given for the same epistle. Accordingly, in one of the most recent of these invaluable productions, which may be purchased for the moderate sum of one shilling, we have upwards of 250 examples, arranged under two separate sections, for the use of ladies and gentlemen respectively. We have business letters in every shape—from a tradesman soliciting patronage or rendering an account—from a merchant ordering goods—from a clerk to his principal requesting leave of absence—applications for situations, from a chancellor to a charwoman—answers to advertisements—letters relative to the character and qualifications of tutors and governesses, cooks and lady's-maids—letters to clergymen and physicians, schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, house-agents and horse-dealers—applications for relief and for subscriptions, for debts and for loans—letters of congratulation and condolence—letters of introduction and invitations—letters from emigrants to their friends at home, and from boys

and girls at school to their anxious parents. The all-important subjects of Love, Courtship, and Matrimony, however, appear to occupy the most prominent place. Every possible contingency is most skilfully kept in view. Thus we have a letter from a gentleman who has been acquainted with the object of his affections from her earliest years, and another from a love-sick swain who ventures to address his bewitching charmer within twelve hours of their first interview at an evening party. 'Believe me, dear Miss ——,' writes the former, 'this is no outbreak of boyish passion, but the hearty and healthy result of a long and affectionate study of your disposition. It is love founded on esteem, and I feel persuaded that your knowledge of my own character will lead you to trace my motives to their right source.' The other trusts that the apparent presumption of his somewhat bold address 'may be mitigated by the consideration that his own feelings are so deeply enlisted in its success or failure!' While another impulsive lover has the audacity to propose a moonlight meeting, a more prudent young man writes first to the lady's papa to announce the ardour of his attachment, and

thus concludes his epistle :—'I have some reason to imagine that I am not altogether disagreeable to your daughter; but I assure you, honestly, that I have not as yet endeavoured to win her affections, for fear it might be repugnant to a father's will.'

In answer to a proposal for a clandestine interview, a right-thinking young lady writes :—'I am altogether surprised at the proposal in your letter. Although our acquaintance has been of but short standing, I believe my conduct has never been such as to give you reason to suppose me capable of an act which, in my opinion, is equally incompatible with truth and female propriety.' Another fair one, of a less scrupulous turn of mind, overcomes her conscientious objections to anything like underhand conduct, by the consideration of her aunt's ungenerous attempts to force another man upon her whom she cannot love, and boldly says in the reply to her admirer :—'I shall be walking at ——, at —— o'clock, when we shall perhaps gain an opportunity of a few minutes' conversation.' Following a middle course between these two extreme cases, a third young lady merely complains of the 'precipitate character' of the

address of a total stranger; and, 'without wishing to say anything harsh,' informs her correspondent that she has felt it to be her duty to lay his letter before her parents.

The ladies are furnished with four different forms of refusal, on the respective grounds of a pre-engagement, want of sympathy, levity of conduct, and insufficient means. Quarrels, misunderstandings, slights, and changes of feeling, are all duly provided for. A lady writes:—'To speak plainly, I feel that my sentiments in regard to yourself are no longer what they were;' while a gentleman breaks off an engagement in the following words:—'My dear ——, With pain I utter it,—I must resign all hopes of our future union. Ask me not wherefore: my answer would inflict an additional pang in the breasts of both.'

As counterparts to these painful communications, we have many other effusions of a more pleasing character. An ardent *fiancée* makes the following delicate announcement to her accepted suitor:—'I have received your pretty present, and will repay you for your kind remembrance of me, with a token more acceptable than money, when I see you. Until then, my

dearest,' etc. etc. Another young lady writes to inform her mother of the result of her gaieties at a fashionable watering-place. 'It seems almost ungrateful,' she says, 'to think of loving any one but you; but oh, mamma, if you saw Henry ——, you would forgive me, I am sure. He is so handsome, so gentle in his manners, and yet so sensible and accomplished!' Among the gentlemen's epistles, we find an absent lover sending his portrait to his 'dearest Julia,' on her birthday, although he feels that 'its original is too deeply stamped on her heart to require any effigy to remind her of him.' Another, after referring to the painfulness of separation, thus expresses himself:—'I shall soon hope once more to bask in the sunshine of my Fanny's sweet countenance, and to feed my imagination with thoughts of the happiness which her placid and sincere disposition will hereafter shed around a home!'

The formidable objection of want of means, to which I have already incidentally referred, appears to be frequently urged by the softer sex, more especially in the humbler ranks of society. Thus, in a letter to a young farmer, the writer remarks:—'Mother says that "they

who ride fast never ride long;"' while a female servant, in answer to a proposal of immediate marriage, inculcates the necessity of prudence, with the view of avoiding 'that poverty which too often leads to misery on both sides.' The same sentiment is indicated by a better educated correspondent in a more elaborate statement, which she thus concludes:—'No, my dear ——, we must wait for better times, and not entail misery beyond calculation upon others, as well as ourselves, by a too hasty step.'

The 'unfavourable' reply of a domestic servant to a young tradesman contains the following pithy announcement:—'And I will give you a word of advice, young man. Court your sweetheart with your tongue, and make sure of her that way, before you commit your feelings to paper. You will thereby save yourself and her a great deal of nonsense.' Another 'Mary-Jane' indites the following point-blank refusal:—'John,—I do not know what could have led you to believe that I had any partiality for you. Such is not the case. I wish you well, as I have no reason for wishing you otherwise, but I have no desire for any attentions from you of any kind.'

Besides a form suitable for a proposal from a widower to a widow, in which he touchingly refers to the fact of their both having been deprived of the partners of their earlier years, we have several specimens of replies, both negative and affirmative. One lady considers herself too far advanced in years; another is prevented by the tenderness of her attachment to the memory of her late husband; while a third 'has no dislike to entering again into the marriage state.'

Of applications for loans and subscriptions, we have numerous examples. Thus:—'Dear ——, I write to ask you a rather disagreeable favour. In consequence of imprudently placing my name to one of ——'s bills, I find that I am likely to be involved in some expense and difficulty, if I cannot at once meet the amount. Would you, under these circumstances, accommodate me?' etc. etc. Another applicant 'has so great an aversion to borrowing money from professional lenders, that he prefers the course of soliciting the aid of some well-known friend!' One writer promptly says in reply:—'I enclose you the sum you require, to which you are heartily welcome;' while it affords much pleasure to another generous individual 'to be able

to accommodate so old and valued a friend.' Refusals, however, are still more amply provided for. Thus we have the brief and decided apology on the score of inability :—'Unhappily I am at this moment so driven for funds that last week I was compelled to borrow five pounds to make up my workmen's wages.' Then follows the polite and circuitous declinature :—'While I readily acknowledge the claim you have upon my friendship, and while I feel that there is no one whom I should be more willing or prouder to oblige than yourself,' etc. etc. 'Hoping that you may be more successful in some other quarter, believe me to remain, ever your sincere friend!' Lastly, we have the point-blank refusal, which the writer has found to be 'the safest, and, in the long-run, the kindest course for all parties :'—'I have always made it a principle in life never to borrow or lend money, not even when members of my own family have been concerned.'

The ingenious reply of a lady to an application for a subscription to a charitable institution must close my selection of samples :—'Mrs. —— regrets exceedingly that the demands upon her purse have of late been so frequent and so

heavy, that on this occasion she has nothing to offer but sympathy and good wishes!'[1]

Apropos to these applications, I have been told that the late Lord Jeffrey was sometimes wicked enough to reply to them in the following strain:—'SIR,—I have received your letter of the 6th inst., soliciting a contribution in behalf of the funds of ——. I have very great pleasure in subscribing' (he always contrived to make "subscribing' the last word on the first page of his note; then at the top of page 2, not, as the recipient fondly imagined, 'the sum of five or ten pounds,' but) 'myself, yours faithfully, FRANCIS JEFFREY.'

[1] One of the most useful Guides to epistolary correspondence—now unfortunately out of print—was published anonymously in London about twenty-eight years ago, by a gentleman now residing in Edinburgh, under the title of *Hints on Letter-Writing*. It contains some very sensible suggestions, and the compiler says in his Preface that 'he has not filled his volume with lifeless forms of letters—dry bones—bare skeletons—destitute of all beauty—nerveless and without feeling: on the contrary, he has made a selection from the *real* correspondence of well-known and able men and women; and where the letters are fictitious, they are taken with care from the works of authors of first-rate ability.'

Even in the 'far East,' such publications are not entirely unknown. A complete introduction to the art of letter-writing, in the Arabic language, compiled by Shuekh Uhmud, was published at Calcutta as far back as 1813, under the euphonious title of *Ul Ujub Ool Oojab*.

Modes of Address and Superscriptions.

The mode of address has varied considerably at different periods. I have already referred to the quaint mixture of formality and affection in the letters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as illustrated by the Eglinton correspondence. At a comparatively recent date, boys and girls at school were taught to address their fathers and mothers, in their letters, as 'Honoured Sir,' 'Honoured Madam,' or 'Honoured Parent;' but the existing style of 'My dear Father,' and 'My dearly beloved Mother,' if not so reverential in its tone, seems to indicate a greater amount of love and affection. Formerly, it was the custom, excepting in the case of very old and intimate friends, to commence every letter with the word 'Sir' or 'Madam,' which are now confined to the correspondence of strangers. 'Respected Sir' appears to be quite obsolete. According to one of the many 'Complete Letter-Writers,' '"*Dear* Sir" and "*Dear* Madam" are justified by a very slight acquaintanceship. In more advanced intimacy,' we are further informed, 'especially in the case of the male sex—we may proceed to

"My dear Sir"—"My dear Mr. Jones"—"My dear Friend"—"Dear Jones"—"My dear Jones," etc.' The illustrious author of *Waverley* must have been influenced by a belief in this delicate graduation when he sat down, on one occasion, to indite an epistle to his friend Tom Moore, which he commenced, in an unguarded moment, with the formal exordium of 'My dear Sir.' Drawing his pen through the unintended words, he wrote immediately below them, 'Damn Sir—My dear Moore.' I have sometimes thought that, except in the case of the Mormons, the expression 'My *dearest* Wife,' so frequently adopted by affectionate husbands, is open to very grave objection—implying, as it does, in strict grammar, at least two other partners—a 'dear' and a 'dearer.' When applied to a special friend, or to a particular son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, or aunt, the superlative epithet may, of course, be used quite correctly; but even in these instances, it is questionable whether the person who indulges in it really means what he says. The close of a letter to a perfect stranger is sometimes calculated to provoke a smile; but still more ludicrous is the concluding mutual assurance of two

inveterate foes, engaged in an angry correspondence—'I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient, humble servant!'

Modes of address in the inside of letters naturally suggest a few remarks on *outside* addresses or superscriptions, to which also incidental allusion has already been made. In the case of the 'upper ten thousand,' the proper form of superscription is well defined, and most of the letter-writing manuals embrace detailed instructions to the uninitiated. Among the other ranks of society, however, a considerable amount of confusion has for some time prevailed with respect to designations. I should, perhaps, be more correct in saying that the 'names of worship' are now generally regarded as common property; and while among the softer sex, not only lady's-maids, but even the rulers of the kitchen, are indignant at the omission of 'Miss' or 'Mrs.,' the humblest butler considers himself quite as much entitled to the addition of 'Esquire' as the master whom he serves, although the said master's blood may happen to be as red as that of the Douglases or the Howards. According to one of the most recent Manuals of Letter-writing, 'the title of

Esquire has become so common that it has ceased to be a mark of particular respect, and it is better generally to use plain *Mr.* instead, except when writing to members of Parliament, landed proprietors, and gentlemen of the legal and medical professions.' 'By all means,' the same authority seriously continues, 'avoid putting a handle on both ends of a name, by writing Mr. John Smith, Esq.' A late eminent sculptor, however, is said to have had such a weakness for squirearchical distinction that in writing, on one occasion, to a Scotch member of Parliament regarding the sale of a bas-relief, he thus expressed himself:—

'John G—, Esq. presents his compliments to Mr. D— and begs to state that John G—, Esq. is prepared to dispose of the piece of sculpture in question for the sum of £50. John G—, Esq. will be glad to learn,' etc.

Some years ago, an English gentleman made several unsuccessful applications for letters at one of the Brazilian post-offices. At length the postmaster allowed him to examine the unclaimed letters, among which he found a good many bearing his name, followed by the word 'Esquire.' On this being pointed out to

the postmaster, he innocently explained that he thought the letters in question were intended for a Mr. Esquire! A friend of my own, whom I shall call William Wallace, was once paying a visit at a country-house, where the footman happened to bear the same Christian name and surname as himself; and one 'fine' morning a letter duly addressed 'William Wallace, Esq.,' was put into his hands, on the reasonable assumption that it was intended for *him*. On perusing its contents, he was somewhat puzzled by most of the writer's allusions; but the mystery was eventually solved by the discovery that the letter was intended for the gentleman in plush! I have heard of an eccentric member of the English Bar, with a great respect for *blood*, who employs three different styles of address on letters to his male correspondents. In the case of a well-born gentleman, he writes the designation without abbreviation, and with a *small* initial letter,—thus, 'esquire.' To a person generally acknowledged as a gentleman, he condescends to give the abbreviated designation of 'Esq.,'—the initial, however, being a *capital* letter; while a doubtful individual must be satisfied with the letter 'E,' followed by an

irregular dash, which may mean anything or nothing. In addressing letters to persons entitled to more than ordinary consideration, it is now a pretty common practice to write 'etc., etc., etc.,' after the name and designation. Without being able to speak positively on the subject, I am inclined to think that this is a comparatively recent 'innovation.'[1] In jocular allusion to the late Sir John Sinclair's numerous titles and distinctions, his humorous correspondent Sir Adam Ferguson once addressed a letter to him thus:—

'Sir JOHN SINCLAIR, Bart.,
A.M., F.R.S., TUVWXYZ.'

Imperfectly Addressed Letters.

Notwithstanding a somewhat prevalent opinion to the contrary, a very large amount of trouble is expended by the post-office authorities upon insufficiently or wrongly addressed letters, which, 'considering that the time of the department is the property of the country,' as

[1] The subject of Esquires and other names of worship is treated in a very learned, as well as very amusing manner by Dr. Nares, in his curious work entitled *Heraldic Anomalies*.

the Postmaster-General truly remarks, 'ought scarcely to be given, to make up for what generally arises from the carelessness of the writers, without an additional charge.' In terms of the official regulations, whenever a letter is found, the address of which is illegible or incomplete, it is passed at once to the 'blind officer,' whose duty it is to try to decipher the writing, to correct any evident mistake or omission, and to put the letter in course to reach its destination. The 'blind officers' are supplied with all the principal Directories, Guides, and Gazetteers, by the help of which, and of their own intelligence, they generally succeed in making out the destinations of the letters referred to them. Like the compositors of a printing establishment, these 'blind officers' appear to possess the faculty of deciphering the most illegible handwriting, and cases might, no doubt, be adduced where they have been able to interpret addresses which the writers themselves would have failed to read a few days after the despatch of their letters. Occasionally we see in the newspapers specimens of very extraordinary addresses, remarkable not only for their utter disregard

of orthography, but also for their ingenious combinations and divisions of words, all in strict accordance with phonetic principles. Thus, Hagness Itchcock, Oileywhite, Amshire (Agnes Hitchcock, Isle of Wight, Hampshire)—John Orsel, Ash Bedles in Such, Lestysheer (John Horsel, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire)—Coneyach lunentick a Siliam (Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum)—and Schromphraydavi (Sir Humphrey Davy). In his interesting account of the British Post-Office—under the title of *Her Majesty's Mails*—Mr. Lewins gives the following as a specimen of the long and involved addresses that frequently appear on the letters of our Irish fellow-countrymen:—'To my sister Bridget, or else to my brother Tim Burke, in care of the Praste, who lives in the parish of Balcumbury in Cork, or if not, to *some dacent ncighbour in Ireland.*'[1] The same writer once saw a letter bearing the name of a large town in the West of England, on which the remainder of the address was, 'Mary H—, a tall woman with two children.' He pays a great compliment to our own portion of the kingdom, when he says that 'the Scotch people exhibit the greatest care in such matters. . . .

[1] See Appendix, No. V.

Their poorer classes,' he continues, 'are certainly better educated, and whilst seldom profuse on their letters, they are cautious enough not to leave anything of consequence unwritten.' Time was, however, when even in enlightened Scotland, quaint superscriptions were not entirely unknown. The following examples are given, under the head of 'Postal Arrangements,' in Captain Dunbar's curious work entitled *Social Life in Former Days, chiefly in the Province of Moray*, the relative letters being all dated at the beginning of the eighteenth century :—

'ffor Mr. Archbald Dumbarr of Thundertounc to be left at Capt. Dumbar's writing Chamber at the Iron revell third storie below the Cross north end of the close at Edinr.'

'For Captain Philip Anstruther off Newgrange att his lodgeing a litle above the fountain-well south side of the street Edenbrough.'

'ffor Mrs. Mary Stowel at Whiteakers in St Andrew Street next door save one to the blew balcony near the sun dyall near long aiker London.'

At a still more recent date, an 'unsophisticated Highlander' is said to have thus addressed an epistle to his brother in the Scottish Metropolis :—'Heer she coes to Embro to Tonald my proather doon a pack closs 3 stares

upp—if this winna fin' er oot the deil winna fin' er oot.'

When it has been fully ascertained, after much elaborate procedure, that nothing further can be done to effect the delivery of a letter—if it contains an address, it is returned to the writer on the same day that it reaches the Returned or 'Dead' Letter Branch; and when possible, this is done without breaking the seal or examining the contents, by means of information on the outside of the cover.

Post-Office Statistics.

According to the latest Report of the Postmaster-General, the correspondence of the kingdom has risen from about 70,000,000 of letters in 1839 (the last year preceding the introduction of penny postage) to 808,118,000 letters in 1868. Several causes have combined to bring about this vast increase of correspondence. The reduction of postage—thanks to Sir Rowland Hill—the growth of the population, the increase of trade, the spread of education, and the improvements (over and above the reduction of postage) which the post-office

has effected with regard to the transmission of letters, have all contributed to produce this remarkable result.

Of the 808,118,000 letters which passed through the post-offices of the United Kingdom during the year 1868, upwards of 3¾ millions were disposed of as follows :—

Returned to writers, ...	3,196,044
Re-issued to corrected addresses, .	151,810
Returned unopened to Foreign Countries,	135,629
Destroyed, or in hand, . . .	331,826
Total,	3,815,309

It appears, however, that the proportion of returned letters in Foreign Countries is considerably larger.

Perhaps it will hardly be credited that, during the same year, no fewer than 13,833 letters were posted *without any address;* and of these, 281 contained cash, notes, bills, and cheques, to the amount of £6375. The numbers applicable to the respective sections of the United Kingdom are not separately stated in the Postmaster-General's Report, but I am satisfied that the posting of unaddressed letters, either with or without coin, is a very rare occurrence on the north side of the Tweed!

The number of *Valentines* which passed through the London post-office in 1864 was upwards of 530,000, being an increase of more than 35,000 upon the previous year; and in 1865 there was a further and still larger increase. As in former years, nearly one-fourth of the Valentines posted in London in 1865 were posted in the western district; and those sent from London to the country were more than twice as numerous as those sent from the country to London. Surely this must indicate a very large amount of unrequited love in the Great Metropolis! About six years ago it was computed that more than 91 per cent. of the inland letters were sent in envelopes; while in the case of foreign and colonial letters, the proprotion, as might have been expected, was considerably smaller; viz., about 65 per cent. During the year 1864, our foreign and colonial correspondence (outward and inward) amounted to 28,000,000 letters, being an increase of 2,000,000 on the previous year. Of these, 6,771,000—or nearly one-fourth of the whole—passed between this country and France; and 4,865,000 between this country and Canada, British North America, and the United States.

I ought to mention that all my figures relate entirely to *letters*, independently of the very large and rapidly increasing number of newspapers and articles transmitted under the Book and Pattern privilege.

Sometimes it becomes a matter of great importance to ascertain the *date* of a letter, and where it is not specified inside, the post-mark is, in most cases, sufficiently distinct to supply the information. This is perhaps the only reasonable objection that can be urged against the use of envelopes, seeing that, in many instances, they are not preserved along with their enclosures; and even where they are preserved, it does not necessarily follow that their connexion with the letters which they contain will always be admitted. A very ingenious contrivance, in which letter and envelope were combined, was introduced a few years ago, but it does not appear to have come into use even among men of business, some of whom still adhere to the old form of making up a letter. Many persons are extremely careless in regard to the dating of their letters, and great inconvenience occasionally results from inattention to this important point. The vague announcement of 'Monday

morning' or 'Tuesday evening,' without the specification of either the month or the year—to say nothing of the *hour*, which we have seen the Romans sometimes included—is frequently the only indication of the date; and when the envelope is not preserved, or the post-mark is illegible, the difficulty of supplying the omission is often insurmountable. As a general rule, moreover, the place where a letter is written, including the post-town, ought to be distinctly stated, in order that the authorities may thereby have it in their power to return the letter to the writer through the 'Dead-Letter Office,' in the event of its not reaching its destination. As already indicated, however, this is now frequently accomplished through the medium of the address of the sender on the flap of the envelope. Apropos to dates, a lady friend has in her possession some very characteristic letters, written by an eccentric Scotch merchant to a correspondent in Manchester towards the beginning of the present century, in one of which an erroneous date is very amusingly corrected. Immediately below the date—10th February 1811—the writer quaintly adds, 'Hout awa! it's the 11th.'[1]

[1] See Appendix, No. VI.

Except for business and official purposes, sealing-wax is now rarely used. Wafers are specially interdicted in the manuals of letter-writing, in consequence of their 'raising a suspicion of hurry, vulgarity, and disrespect!' Lord Nelson, in sending a despatch to the Danish Government, during the heat of the bombardment of Copenhagen, refused a wafer. 'No!' said his Lordship; 'do not let them suppose we are in a hurry, or confused.' Again, Sir Walter Scott is said to have once returned a wafered letter to the writer with this remark:—'I am not a particular man, but I detest wafers.' There is, moreover, no real security in wafers, and probably still less in adhesive envelopes, which are now in almost universal use. Both may easily be loosened by the application of either water or steam. The best mode of securing a letter is first to wafer it and then seal it with wax. When, however, an adhesive envelope is used, the proper course is to *damp*, rather than wet, *both* sides of the flap, before pressing it down; and if the paper is very thick, the upper side should be again damped after being pressed down.

The following table, compiled from the annual

reports of the Postmaster-General, will furnish some idea of the progressive rate of increase in the number of letters delivered in the three divisions of the United Kingdom :—

Estimated No. of Letters.	England and Wales.	Ireland.	Scotland.	United Kingdom.
1839, . . .	59,983,100	8,302,000	7,623,000	75,908,100
Ditto, *Franks*, .	5,172,000	1,055,000	336,000	6,563,000
1840, . . .	132,003,000	18,211,000	18,554,000	168,768,000
1851-5, . . . (*Average* of 5 years.)	329,783,000	39,384,000	40,999,000	410,166,000
1868, . . .	670,046,000	60,260,000	77,812,000	808,118,000

Accordingly, in the year 1868, the proportion of letters delivered to the population was, in the case of the whole kingdom, 26 to each person ; being 30 to each person in England, 24 to each person in Scotland, and only 10 to each person in Ireland.[1] Considering the enormous multitudes in first and second childhood who never write at all, and also those enviable individuals with whom the receipt of a letter constitutes an

[1] At the announcement of the death of Morgan Owen, an eminent Welsh bard and antiquary, at the age of 80, about two years ago, it was stated that he had never either written or received a letter during his whole life.

historical event, the appetite or necessity for letter-writing, among certain classes of the community, must be what our old friend Dominie Sampson would have termed 'prodigious.' What effect the extended use of the telegraph may produce upon correspondence, time alone will show; but it is hardly to be expected that, however cheap the transmission of messages may yet become, the electric wire will take the place of the pen to any great extent, except in the case of certain commercial and political communications.

Receipt of Letters.

The receipt of a budget of letters at one's morning meal is generally productive of a mixture of pleasure and pain. It rarely happens that they are all gratifying. The happiness which we derive from one or two joyous epistles from friends or relatives at a distance is considerably modified by the simultaneous appearance of a bankrupt tradesman's bill, an application for a loan, or the intimation of an unexpected death. Cowper's description of the

postman of last century is perfectly applicable to our own day:—

> 'He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
> Cold and yet cheerful: messenger of grief
> Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some;
> To him indifferent whether grief or joy.'

The multifarious character of the communications received by the chief magistrate of a large community was very happily referred to by a late estimable Lord Provost of the Scottish metropolis, at a dinner which was given to him, about four years ago, by a number of his fellow-citizens:—'His first magisterial breakfast,' he said, 'is scarcely over, but among the letters and parcels which bestrew his table are several ominously fastened packets unlike anything his previous experience has ever met with; they are opened of course in due turn, and the first is found to contain a considerable volume of manuscript poems, ready for publication, and only awaiting his Lordship's criticism, with perhaps a small advance towards the necessary expenses, to be repaid in any number of copies. Under the next seal is discovered a different surprise, but a no less complimentary tribute to the wisdom of the robe;

it is in the shape of an elaborate essay on a new and easy mode of reducing the national debt; it is very short, only some fifty pages of manuscript; but the author proposes to wait upon his Lordship, and explain, more fully than he can do in such a brief form, his views upon this all-important subject. What an imperishable monument will his Lordship raise for his memory if he accomplish this great work; and the author is prepared to demonstrate that, by the most trifling outlay on the part of his Lordship, the enterprise may be set on foot. If one finds it difficult to settle down calmly to ordinary routine of business after having thus soared amid the loftiest flights of genius, there is surely some excuse. But there is a still greater change effected by this wondrous mantle, for it has only to be placed upon the shoulders of the infant Provost when there appears to be gently distilled into his heart feelings of the most unbounded charity and generosity—a true, sterling benevolence unattained by any ordinary mortal; and, curious to say, by some similar magical influence, the possession of this virtue at once becomes known to every individual upon whom fortune has not

cast a favourable eye, and that, too, though he may be far beyond the limits within which a narrow conventionality has prescribed the civic boundaries. The benevolence of the Chief Magistrate knows no such limits; it is privileged with appeals from every quarter of the globe; the more it is appealed to, the more brightly it burns; in fact, it is inextinguishable.'

People act very differently with reference to the destruction of their letters. While some persons have a strong tendency to preserve every letter they receive, others go to the opposite extreme, and systematically indulge in their wholesale extinction. How frequently it happens that the inconsiderate destruction of a letter ultimately proves the source of very great inconvenience! Most sensible persons endeavour to make a *sclection*—retaining their more important letters, and committing the great mass of their correspondence to the flames; but it is sometimes very difficult to draw the line.[1]

Handwriting.

In an essay on letters and letter-writers, a few words on the subject of handwriting will

[1] See Appendix No. VII.

probably not be considered out of place. In these days of extended education, it appears to be somewhat doubtful whether sufficient attention is paid, in any class of society, to each of the three immortal *R-s*. Probably, in most instances, due prominence is given to arithmetic; but I am disposed to think that the vast importance of good reading and writing is very frequently overlooked. Even in our pulpits and our courts of justice—English as well as Scotch,—a really good reader is by no means common; and in ordinary life, a clear, articulate, pleasing enunciation is the characteristic of one in a thousand. The disadvantages which result from such an unfortunate state of things are quite incalculable; and it is surprising to find so much indifference on the subject. In like manner, the most superficial observer must have been struck with the rarity of good writing. The Civil Service Commissioners make the following remarks on the subject of handwriting in their *Ninth Annual Report* (1864):—'In our former Reports we have observed upon the importance which we attach to good handwriting, as one of the most useful accomplishments which a clerk can possess, and one which any young man has it in

his power to acquire.[1] We believe that the effect of our examinations has been, upon the whole, to improve the general style of writing for official purposes. There is, however, room for much further improvement. In consequence, probably, of the insufficient attention paid to the subject in schools, the quantity of bad handwriting which comes before us is still very great, and we are therefore unable, without causing inconvenience to the public departments by delay in supplying vacancies, to enforce so high a standard in this respect as we should desire. It is almost superfluous to state that we do not demand or desire that the writing should be of any particular style, provided that it possesses the main characteristic of *legibility*. What we require, as candidates are invariably informed, is "the clear formation of the letters of the alphabet." In the appendix to our *Fourth Report*, we printed a facsimile of documents written in one of the public offices; and we have inserted in the present volume a collection of similar specimens. Representing, as they do, the ordin-

[1] According to Lord Chesterfield, 'every man who has the use of his eyes and his right hand, can write whatever hand he pleases.'

ary current work of the writers, they are not given as free from faults; but we think that they will show that the essential quality of distinctness may be obtained without the sacrifice of other desirable elements of a good official hand.' In the specimens referred to, the handwriting is of a neat, round character; every word being distinctly written, and consequently quite legible.

The learned author of *Friends in Council*, in alluding to the subject of handwriting, puts the following sensible words into the mouth of the philosophic Milverton:—'It is certainly astonishing to see how very few people write legibly. I can't think how it is that bad writers make up their minds to lose so much force as they do by bad writing. If you address anything to a correspondent, you want him to understand it at once. You want it to come with its full force upon his mind. Accordingly, if you write a word badly, you had better erase it, and write the word over again carefully. You do not wish your friend to puzzle over what you are imparting to him. Bad writers cannot now plead great examples for bad writing. It is a curious thing, but going back for a long period,

you may notice that, with few exceptions, Prime Ministers have been remarkably good writers. Canning, I am told, wrote an exquisite hand; the Duke of Wellington, a clear and noble one; Sir Robert Peel, a most legible hand, a thought, perhaps, too mercantile for beauty, but still an excellent hand. Lord Palmerston's handwriting is a model of good penmanship; Lord John Russell's, forcible and distinct; and I might continue to give a long list of eminent men who have not disdained to take much pains with their handwriting. I mention these statesmen because all of them had, or have, to write a great quantity in the course of most days, and might fairly be excused if they wrote badly. I am sorry to condemn bad writing, for it hits some of my best friends very hard—men who seem to do everything well but their writing; . . . yet I must confess that bad handwriting is a blemish.'

Mr. Helps reiterates his views on the subject of handwriting in one of the most recent of his 'Short Essays' contributed to the columns of *Good Words*. In a company of friends, he produces four or five letters of very eminent men, all more or less illegible, which their col-

lective ingenuity could only partially decipher. In at least two instances, no one could make out the signature, which, in the case of one of the letters, 'was generally thought to resemble the first step of a centipede after it had crawled out from an ink-bottle!'

Not many years ago, a writer in the time-honoured columns of *Blackwood*, expressed the same favourable opinion as Mr. Helps regarding the penmanship of British statesmen:—'We are bound to add,' he says, 'that the present race of statesmen are, on the whole, distinguished by excellent penmanship. Lord Derby's handwriting is beautiful—equally elegant and legible. Lord Stanley's is as legible as large pica, but certainly not elegant. Lord Palmerston's is free, pleasant, and by no means obscure. The Duke of Newcastle writes an excellent hand—long, well-formed letters, and very distinct. Lord John Russell's penmanship is not unlike the Colonial Minister's, but on a smaller scale. Other instances might be cited, but it is more to the purport of the present paper to say that the East India Company, nearly all through the present century, have been remarkably fortunate in the caligraphy of their chief servant, the

Governor-General, who has set an example of penmanship to the whole class of writers, which ought not to have been thrown away. Lord Wellesley's handwriting is, perhaps, the best that we have ever seen. Sir George Barlow's was little inferior. Lord Minto wrote a remarkably firm, solid, legible hand. Lord Hastings and Lord Amherst were somewhat stately in their penmanship, but every letter was as clear as type. Lord William Bentinck ran his letters, and sometimes his words, a little too much into each other, but he wrote a good flowing hand that was rarely otherwise than legible. Lord Auckland's writing was peculiarly round and distinct—the very reverse of his successor's, Lord Ellenborough's, which was pretty and ladylike, and not distinct; but he was always one of the Honourable Company's naughty boys. Lord Dalhousie wrote a beautiful hand—flowing and elegant, but very distinct; and the present Governor-General, Lord Canning, need not blush to see his handwriting placed beside that of any of his contemporaries.'

My own collection of autographs confirms the truth of the preceding statements respecting the handwriting of British statesmen; and indeed,

speaking generally, the members of both Houses of Parliament, during the last thirty or forty years, may be pronounced very good writers. I used to think that the most remarkable exceptions to this rule were to be found among the *Radical* members of the House of Commons; and in more than one page of my collection, where the franks of these democratic gentlemen are placed in juxtaposition, the handwriting is certainly below the average.

Jacob Bryant said of Archdeacon Coxe's hieroglyphics, that they could be called neither a hand nor a fist, but a foot, and that a club one. They formed a clumsy, tangled, black skein, that ran across the paper in knots which it was impossible to untie into a meaning. On one occasion, Bishop Barrington, while expostulating with the Archdeacon for sending him a letter he could not read, told him of a very bad writer, a Frenchman, who answered a letter thus :—'Out of respect, Sir, I write to you with my own hand; but to facilitate the reading, I send you a copy, which I have caused my amanuensis to make.'

John Bell, of the Chancery bar, wrote *three* hands: one, which no one could read but him-

self; another, which his clerk could read, and he could not; and a third, which nobody could read.

A comparatively recent writer in the *Saturday Review* speaks very slightingly of caligraphy; and in opposition to the opinions already referred to, appears to go the length of holding that bad handwriting is an all but universal characteristic of great men. He has no objection to the inculcation of good penmanship on 'the lower middle classes,' or on 'feminine correspondents;' but stoutly disputes the propriety of your man of genius being encumbered with such a 'humble, excellent, clerkly, working-man's virtue' as legibility.

Under certain not very enviable circumstances, a bad writer has it in his power to draw a small amount of comfort from his illegible productions. 'Your handwriting is very bad indeed,' said a gentleman to a young college friend, who was more addicted to boating and cricketing than to hard study; 'you really ought to learn to write better.' 'Ay, ay,' returned the young man, 'it is all very well for you to tell me that, but if I were to write better, people would be finding out how I spell.'

In one of Charles Lamb's last letters, addressed to his old schoolfellow, George Dyer, he amusingly touches upon the subject of handwriting. 'You always wrote hieroglyphically,' he says; 'you ever wrote what I call a Grecian's hand. Your boy-of-genius hand and your mercantile hand are various. By your flourishes, I should think you never learned to make eagles or corkscrews, or flourish the governors' names in the writing school; and by the tenor and cut of your letters, I suspect you were never in it at all. By the length of this scrawl, you will think I have a design upon your optics; but I have writ as large as I could, out of respect to them; too large, indeed, for beauty. Mine is a sort of Deputy-Grecian's hand; a little better, and more of a worldly hand, than a Grecian's, but still remote from the mercantile.'[1]

Signatures.

It frequently happens that where the body of a letter is clearly and legibly written, the *signature* of the writer is what has been aptly termed

[1] 'Grecian' and 'Deputy-Grecian' denote the higher *forms* of the boys at Christ's Hospital.

'a hopeless puzzle of intemperate scratches.' All collectors of autographs are familiar with illegible signatures; and before the abolition of Franking, the Post-Office authorities were frequently applied to for information as to the names of the privileged writers. As illustrative examples, I may mention the Parliamentary signatures of Lord Hotham, Sir James Weir Hogg, Mr. James Johnston of Straiton, Sir M. Folkes, and General Sharpe of Hoddom. But probably the most eccentric signature that ever appeared upon a frank is that of Mr. Richard Hodgson, which bears a striking resemblance to a bad impression of a wild bird's claw, and consequently, is about as like the writer's name as the most mysterious Egyptian hieroglyphic. I happen to possess facsimiles of thirty different signatures of the first Emperor Napoleon, some of which are certainly very extraordinary productions; but the most peculiar of the series is entirely eclipsed by that of Mr. Hodgson.

A few years ago, a lamented medical friend received an invitation to dinner in something like the following terms:—'EDINR., *17th Novr.* —MY DEAR SIR,—Will you favour me with your company at dinner on Friday next, the

25th inst., at half-past six? Yours very truly, ——.' Then followed a series of 'intemperate scratches,' by way of signature, which my friend failed to decipher; and as he was unacquainted with his correspondent's handwriting, and the writer's place of abode was not specified in the note, he was unable to send a reply.

Even where a signature is quite distinct, an amusing misunderstanding, in the case at least of a Peer, may sometimes arise regarding it. Not many years before his death, the late Earl of Glasgow had occasion to travel from London to Glasgow, and on taking his ticket at the booking-office of the railway station, tendered a £10 note in payment. Before giving change, the clerk, in accordance with the usual custom, requested him to indorse the note with his name; and on his Lordship's complying with the proposal and returning the note to the official, the latter, after a contemptuous glance at the signature 'Glasgow,' tossed it back to the owner, exclaiming indignantly, with the air of a man whose time was too precious to be trifled with, 'Put your *own* name to it, and not the name of the place you want to go to!'

There has been a good deal of discussion as

to which of our English kings was the first to sign his own name. If the point is to be decided by the evidence afforded in the recently published facsimiles of National Manuscripts, Richard II. would appear to be entitled to the distinction, in a document bearing the date of 1386. An earlier writing exhibits the well-known motto of his father, the chivalrous 'Black Prince,' but it is difficult to determine whether the curious signature attached to it is autograph or not. The first holograph letter in the same collection is an epistle, in French, to Richard de Clifford from the pen of another Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry V. (1413-22.)

Speaking of signatures, some interesting conclusions as to the state of elementary instruction in this country may be deduced from our marriage registers. Thus it appears from the last detailed Report of the Registrar-General, applicable to the year 1866, that of the 23,688 couples married in Scotland during that year, 21,032 bridegrooms, and 18,483 brides, signed their names *in full;* while 2656 bridegrooms, and 5202 brides signed by *mark.* In other words, 88·78 per cent. of the men, and 78·50 per cent. of the women, signed in full; while 11·22

per cent. of the men, and 22·0 per cent. of the women signed by mark. In England, during the same year, only 78·4 per cent. of the men, and 70·0 per cent. of the women, were able to write their names in the marriage register. Accordingly, it would appear that, in respect to the accomplishment in question, the gentlemen of England are slightly behind the ladies of Scotland! and the statistics of previous years exhibit similar results. In some districts, the proportion of signatures by mark is very much larger than in others. In the case of certain counties—chiefly in the south-west of Scotland—this circumstance is, to a great extent, accounted for by the large number of Irish who are intermixed with the native population. Too much importance, however, ought not to be attached either to the absence or the presence of the signature in full. In the case of many persons, the capacity of writing is confined to the signing of their names; and even the signature itself is sometimes a matter of considerable difficulty. Others again may be able to write a little who cannot sign their names; and on the all-important occasion of marriage we may reasonably suppose that, in

the case of many of the softer sex, the signature by mark is frequently the result of a temporary nervousness.

Individuality of Handwriting.

The individuality of handwriting is so remarkable—at least in the case of the male sex—that even an approach to classification is a very difficult undertaking. I shall, however, make the attempt in the following list, which, it will be observed, embraces the names of a large number of distinguished men. I ought to state that, in the great majority of cases, the character of the hand is deduced from a single specimen of writing, which perhaps may not be considered a very fair criterion.

Free and flowing.—William Pitt, David Garrick, Marquis Wellesley, Marquis of Dalhousie, Earl Russell, Earl of Shaftesbury, Rev. Dr. Guthrie.

Free, but somewhat angular and ladylike.—Duke of Wellington (late), Earl of Derby (late), Earl of Dalhousie (formerly Lord Panmure).

Free, but not well formed.—Lord Macaulay, Rev. Robert Hall, John Wilson ('Christopher North'), Edward Irving, Dean Stanley, Rev. Dr. Norman Macleod.

Distinct round hands (in some cases very *upright.*)—Lord Chancellor Eldon, Sir James Mackintosh, Sir Walter Scott, Richard Cobden, Thomas Carlyle, Charles

Dickens, Dr. Wilberforce (Bishop of Winchester), Lord Lindsay (now Earl of Crawford and Balcarres), Dean Alford.

Neat, small, and on the whole legible.—Theodore Hook, Hugh Miller, Rev. Dr. Pusey, Dr. Robert Chambers, Harrison Ainsworth, Alfred Tennyson, John Ruskin, James Anthony Froude, Rev. Dr. Candlish, Lord Lytton, Shirley Brooks.

Very small, neat, and legible.—Thomas Gray,[1] Matthew Henry, Philip Doddridge, Samuel Rogers, Rev. Dr. John Brown, Giuseppe Mazzini.

Very neat and regular, but somewhat cramped and formal.—Sir James Graham (late), William Ewart Gladstone, M. Guizot, Rev. Dr. Caird.

Good bold hands.—Dugald Stewart, Patrick Fraser Tytler, Lord Brougham, Isaac Taylor, Dr. Whately (Archbishop of Dublin), Duke of Argyll, Rev. Charles Kingsley, Dr. Livingstone, Martin F. Tupper.

Beautifully formed and distinct.—Duke of Portland (Prime Minister), Leigh Hunt, David M. Moir ('Delta'), Sir Frederick Pollock, William M. Thackeray.

Bold and magnificent, but rather large.—Thomas Aird, Sheridan Knowles, Lord Elcho, John Steell.

Distinct, but vulgar.—Daniel O'Connell, Joseph Hume.

Very ordinary and badly formed.—James Hogg, Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, Lord Chancellor Campbell.

Systematically illegible.—Rev. Dr. Chalmers.

The following is one of a series of contributions, by an anonymous correspondent, to the columns of an English journal, during the year

[1] The author of the 'Elegy' is said to have usually written with a *crow-quill*, in accordance with the practice of 'General' Tom Thumb.

1866, relative to the autographs of some other eminent persons, chiefly of an earlier age :—

QUEEN ELIZABETH.—While princess she wrote a beautiful engrossing hand—clear and regular, almost, as an engraving of letters. After she had been Queen a long time, a melancholy change occurs. The letters are thin, spiteful; the lines irregular; an ugly old maid's version of her former hand, and the signature is a thing to make one bless one's-self.

MARTIN LUTHER.—Firm and legible, though not very equal nor very straight.

SIR THOMAS MORE.—By no means displaying the calm firmness he possessed; the lines crooked, and tumbling down hill.

RUBENS.—Manly, bold, with a careless ease and clearness denoting mastery of hand.

LORD BACON.—Very like an elegant modern shorthand. Clear, neat, and regular. The signature involved with broken lines, as if a fly had struggled and died in a spider's web.

VOLTAIRE.—Very clear, regular, steady, and straight; evidently not written rapidly, but with a continuous ease.

OLIVER CROMWELL.—Large, bold, legible, steady, sharp, and straight. The signature made up of halberds and pointed palisades. But another letter is not at all of this character. It displays a perplexed and undecided mind at the time it was written.

PRINCE DE CONDE.—Not at all in accordance with the strong expression and buffalo features of his face.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY.—Firm, clear, steady, but not without emotion.

CUVIER.—Very like the writing of Charlotte Corday, but not so strong and compact.

DANTON.—Wilful, daring, without method or care.

GEORGE THE FOURTH.—Not at all the very gentlemanly hand most people would expect—rather like a housemaid's.

POPE.—Very bad, small, full of indecision; a very hedgerow of corrections and erasures.

CARDINAL WOLSEY.—A good hand, disturbed only by nervous energy and self-will.

PORSON.—Correct and steady; the reverse of his personal appearance and habits.

SHAKESPEARE.—A very bad hand indeed, confused, crowded, crooked in the lines, scarcely legible.

NAPOLEON.—Still more illegible. No letters formed at all; the signature a mere hasty 'scrimmage' with the pen.

In the second volume of the facsimiles of the National Manuscripts already referred to, the gradual discontinuance of Gothic characteristics, and the development of individualism in handwriting, constitute two prominent features. As good illustrations of the latter, a recent critic in the *North British Review* selects three letters from Thomas Ruthall, Bishop of Durham, to Cardinal Wolsey, in the memorable year 1513; of which the first is in a professional hand, corrected by the Bishop, while the two others are in his own cursive handwriting. 'They have, in their way,' he says, 'as much individuality as the human countenance itself, . . . which could only grow when writing had become a life-long habit, . . . and above all, where men

write for themselves, and with the *abandon* of men writing their own thoughts. Even in the present day,' he truly continues, 'the clerkly hand of those who write officially is, except in the upper grades of the profession, chiefly characterized by the lack of individuality.' It does not necessarily follow that individuality in handwriting implies illegibility, although, no doubt, as a general rule, the most decidedly characteristic hands present no very striking resemblance to copperplate. For the ordinary purposes of life, however, if it come to be a question between legibility without individuality, and individuality without legibility, I confess that I am very much disposed to prefer the former, even in the case of 'men of genius;' on the simple ground that few occupations are more aggravating than a tedious and uncertain effort to decipher a page of hieroglyphics, whether they happen to be the handiwork of a perfect stranger or of one's dearest friend.

In his recent work on *Animals and Plants under Domestication*, Mr. Darwin makes the following interesting observations on the subject of handwriting:—'On what a curious combination of corporeal structure, mental character,

and training, must handwriting depend! Yet every one must have noted the occasional close similarity of the handwriting in father and son, although the father had not taught the son. A great collector of franks assured me that in his collection there were several franks of father and son hardly distinguishable except by their dates. Hofacker, in Germany, remarks on the inheritance of handwriting; and it has even been asserted that English boys, when taught to write in France, naturally cling to their English manner of writing.'

I have sometimes been struck with the peculiarity here referred to, particularly in the case of signatures; and in those families where the same Christian name has prevailed throughout a series of generations, the resemblance is occasionally very striking. The signature of the late Lord Palmerston was remarkably similar to that of his father.

The members of the medical profession are not celebrated for their caligraphy—if, at least, we may form an opinion from their prescriptions, which, however, their patients are probably not intended to understand; but, prescriptions apart, my observation leads me to

conclude that, in respect to handwriting, they are surpassed by both lawyers and clergymen. Authors also have the reputation of writing badly; but, so far as my experience goes, they are certainly not below the average. Thackeray, for example, was remarkable both for the clearness of his handwriting and for the general neatness of his manuscripts; and little more than a year ago, our old friend 'Sylvanus Urban' pronounced a very favourable verdict on the handwriting of two other distinguished authors. After acknowledging that 'Dickens's manuscript is what printers call bad copy,' he goes on to say that 'Shirley Brooks writes plainly, and with very little revision; while Douglas Jerrold's copy was almost as good as copperplate.' He further informs us, however, that 'Tom Taylor writes as if he had wool at the end of his pen;' and that 'Lord Lyttleton, who moved a clause to the Reform Bill, that nobody should have a vote who could not write a legible hand, writes so illegibly that the clerks at the table could not read the resolution which he handed in.'[1]

[1] 'Christopher Kenrick,' in *Gentleman's Magazine* for December 1868.

If the handwriting of the male sex is characterized by its individuality, that of the ladies, on the other hand, appears to be no less remarkable for the very opposite quality—to wit, the painful uniformity of its style. Occasionally, no doubt, we meet with a lady's handwriting which is distinguished by its boldness and freedom; but I think it cannot be denied that stiff, formal angularity has long been the prevailing characteristic. It is by no means improbable that the largely extended use of steel pens may have something to do with the peculiarity in question; and possibly, in the course of time, the same cause may produce a greater uniformity in the handwriting of the male sex. As an example of a fine female hand, I may mention that of the Queen, whose signature is peculiarly bold and dignified. The handwriting of most of the literary ladies who figure in my collection of autographs is by no means remarkable for its beauty. While Miss Ferrier, Mrs. Trollope, Miss Mitford, and Miss Martineau all write very ordinary hands, those of 'L. E. L.' and Mrs. Norton, although by no means pretty, have the merit of being both regular and

legible. As tolerably favourable examples, I may mention the Countess of Blessington, Lady Eastlake, Helen Faucit (Mrs. Martin), Mrs. Godwin, Lady Charlotte Bury, and Adelaide Kemble—the handwriting of the three last, although very different in character, being bold and decided; while that of Charlotte Brontë may be referred to as remarkable for its legibility, notwithstanding its excessive minuteness.

Character from Handwriting.

It has long been a pretty prevalent opinion that the leading points of a person's character may be deduced from his handwriting; and most of us are probably familiar with the advertisements of professed interpreters which from time to time appear in the public prints in something like the following terms:—'Send 13 postage stamps, along with a specimen of your ordinary handwriting, to the subjoined address, and in the course of a few days you will receive a full and correct description of the principal features in your character.' I have occasionally heard of very good shots being made by these learned professors. Their

descriptions, besides being somewhat vague, are generally so very *comprehensive* that it frequently happens that some of the qualities specified are perfectly correct. In most cases, moreover, the 'opinion' embraces a large proportion of favourable attributes, which the amiable applicants complacently appropriate without the smallest hesitation. The following is a copy of a tolerably truthful reply which a friend received, several years ago, from a female diviner rejoicing in the name of Mrs. Gedoin Jenkins:—'A busy and anxious person—a strong and active mind—the intellect ever at work—it is no easy life this character leads—the mental energy is ever jolting over difficulties—the nature quick and sententious—the temper excitable and solicitous—the disposition hasty and impetuous, ready with expedient, prompt in action—but there is ever too much of impatience—a lively imagination prompts to unusual diligence.—This character must find the world very slow.—There is little he meets that keeps pace with his desires—the ability is close and vigorous—a practical genius—a mind that devotes itself to usefulness—a worker of difficult things, and of inflexible perseverance—the will is restless and unsettled

—it will have its way—but it hardly knows what that way is.—The taste is acquisitive—there is a natural tendency to thrift, an economist from principle; much readiness of talent, but all turned to one purpose—liberality is all screwed down to practical proof—the judgment is ever on the rack—we have here the rough side of wisdom—strong and fastidious, pertinacious and inflexible—the leading feature is restless ability—the weak point, too anxious a temperament.'

I am inclined to believe that, in a general way, a certain relation exists between character and handwriting. Upwards of twenty years ago, an article on 'Autography' appeared in *Chambers's Journal*, in which reference is made to a writer in the *Northern Journal of Medicine* (the late Dr. William Seller?), who furnishes a physiological reason, viz., *temperament*, for the diversities in handwriting. The author of the article considers that the two extremes of natural temperament or complexion are well known to every one. 'We shall take,' he says, 'a man with light auburn hair, blue sparkling eyes, a ruddy complexion, ample chest, and muscular, well-rounded, agile frame. . . . When such a man sits down to write, he makes short

work of it. He snatches the first pen that comes in the way, never looks how it is pointed, dabs it into the ink, and then dashes on from side to side of the paper in a full, free, and slip-slop style, his ideas—or at all events his words—flowing faster than his agile fingers and leaping muscles can give them a form. . . . On the contrary, select a man with deep black hair, black eyes, brown or sallow complexion, and thin spare form. . . . After weighing well his subject in his mind, he sits down deliberately, selects and mends his pen, adjusts his paper, and in close, stiff, and upright characters traces with a snail's pace his well-weighed and sententious composition.' He then refers to the intermediate shades of temperament, and gives a classified table embracing six different heads, to each of which a special style of handwriting is assigned.

L'art de juger du Caractère des Hommes sur leur Ecriture is the title of a little French work on the subject under consideration. The author gives several interesting facsimiles of handwriting, including that of Voltaire, Chateaubriand, Queen Elizabeth of England, and her unfortunate 'sister,' Mary Queen of Scots. In referring to the two royal autographs, he says,

'Who would believe that these two handwritings are of the same age? The first (that of Elizabeth) denotes hardness of character and ostentation; the other indicates simpleness, sweetness, nobleness. The difference of these two hands plainly answers to that of their characters.'

Like all sound and practical preachers, I must take leave to conclude my somewhat rambling observations with a direct address to my 'gentle readers' in the shape of a very brief

Moral,

by way of practical application:—

As to *matter*.—Let your letters be expressed in a simple, natural, easy, unaffected style; and let their length depend upon the subject in hand and other regulating circumstances.

As to *manner*.—Let your handwriting be as distinct and legible as possible; and if a postscript should occasionally prove unavoidable, never run the risk of making your correspondent *cross*, by resorting to the objectional practice of crossing.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Madame de Sévigné à M. de Coulanges.

À Paris, 15 *décembre* 1670.

Je m'en vais vous mander la chose la plus étonnante, la plus surprenante, la plus merveilleuse, la plus miraculeuse, la plus triomphante, la plus étourdissante, la plus inouïe, la plus singulière, la plus extraordinaire, la plus incroyable, la plus imprévue, la plus grande, la plus petite, la plus rare, la plus commune, la plus éclatante, la plus secrète jusqu'à aujourd'hui, la plus brillante, la plus digne d'envie ; une chose que nous ne saurions croire à Paris ; comment la pourroit-on croire à Lyon ? une chose qui fait crier miséricorde à tout le monde ; une chose qui comble de joie Madame de Rohan et Madame de Hauterive ; une chose enfin qui se fera dimanche, où ceux qui la verront croiront avoir la *berlue ;* une chose qui se fera dimanche, et qui ne sera peut-être pas faite lundi. Je ne puis me résoudre à vous la dire ; devinez-la, je vous le donne en trois ; *jetez-vous votre langue aux chiens ?* Hé bien ! il faut donc vous la dire. M. de Lauzun épouse dimanche au Louvre,

devinez qui? Je vous le donne en quatre, je vous le donne en dix, je vous le donne en cent. Madame de Coulanges dit,—voila qui n'est pas bien difficile à deviner ; c'est Madame de la Valière. Point du tout, Madame. C'est donc Mademoiselle de Retz? Point du tout, vous êtes bien provinciale. Ah! vraiment, nous sommes bien bêtes, dites-vous, c'est Mademoiselle Colbert. Encore moins. C'est assurément Mademoiselle de Créqui. Vous n'y êtes pas. Il faut donc à la fin vous le dire : il épouse dimanche au Louvre, avec la permission du Roi, Mademoiselle— Mademoiselle de—Mademoiselle, devinez le nom.— Il épouse Mademoiselle, MADEMOISELLE, la grande Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle fille de feu MONSIEUR, Mademoiselle, petite-fille de Henri IV., Mademoiselle d'Eu, Mademoiselle Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d'Orléans, Mademoiselle, cousine-germaine du Roi, Mademoiselle, destinée au trône, Mademoiselle, le seul parti de France qui fût digne de MONSIEUR. Voilà un beau sujet de discourir. Si vous criez, si vous êtes hors de vous-même, si vous dites que nous avons menti, que cela est faux, qu'on se moque de vous, que voilà une belle raillerie, que cela est bien fade à imaginer ; si enfin vous nous dites des injures, nous trouvons que vous avez raison ; nous en avons fait autant que vous. Adieu ; les lettres qui seront portées par cet ordinaire vous feront voir si nous disons vrai ou non.

No. II.

Spanish Letter.

The following description of James IV. of Scotland, and of the condition of his kingdom, is contained in a letter from the Prothonotary Don Pedro de Ayala to Ferdinand and Isabella, dated 25th July 1498. The letter is embraced in the first volume of Bergenroth's 'Calendar of Letters, Despatches, and State Papers, in the Archives at Simancas and elsewhere' (1862):—

'The King is 25 years and some months old. He is of noble stature, neither tall nor short, and as handsome in complexion and shape as a man can be. His address is very agreeable. He speaks the following foreign languages: Latin, very well; French, German, Flemish, Italian, and Spanish; Spanish as well as the Marquis, but he pronounces it more distinctly. He likes very much to receive Spanish letters. His own Scotch language is as different from English as Aragonese from Castilian. The King speaks, besides, the language of the savages who live in some parts of Scotland and on the islands. It is as different from Scotch as Biscayan is from Castilian. His knowledge of languages is wonderful. He is well read in the Bible and in some other devout books. He is a good historian. He has read many

Latin and French histories, and profited by them, as he has a very good memory. He never cuts his hair or his beard. It becomes him very well.

'He fears God, and observes all the precepts of the Church. He does not eat meat on Wednesdays and Fridays. He would not ride on Sundays for any consideration, not even to mass. He says all his prayers. Before transacting any business he hears two masses. After mass he has a cantata sung, during which he sometimes despatches very urgent business. He gives alms liberally, but is a severe judge, especially in the case of murderers. He has a great predilection for priests, and receives advice from them, especially from the Friars Observant, with whom he confesses. Rarely, even in joking, a word escapes him that is not the truth. He prides himself much upon it, and says it does not seem to him well for kings to swear their treaties as they do now. The oath of a King should be his royal word, as was the case in bygone ages. He is neither prodigal nor avaricious, but liberal when occasion requires. He is courageous, even more so than a King should be. I am a good witness of it. I have seen him often undertake most dangerous things in the last wars. I sometimes clung to his skirts, and succeeded in keeping him back. On such occasions he does not take the least care of himself. He is not a good captain, because he

begins to fight before he has given his orders. He said to me that his subjects serve him with their persons and goods, in just and unjust quarrels, exactly as he likes, and that, therefore, he does not think it right to begin any warlike undertaking without being himself the first in danger. His deeds are as good as his words. For this reason, and because he is a very humane prince, he is much loved. He is active, and works hard. When he is not at war he hunts in the mountains. I tell your Highnesses the truth when I say that God has worked a miracle in him, for I have never seen a man so temperate in eating and drinking out of Spain. Indeed, such a thing seems to be superhuman in these countries. He lends a willing ear to his counsellors, and decides nothing without asking them; but in great matters he acts according to his own judgment, and, in my opinion, he generally makes a right decision. I recognise him perfectly in the conclusion of the last peace, which was made against the wishes of the majority of his kingdom.

'When he was a minor he was instigated by those who held the government to do some dishonourable things. They favoured his love intrigues with their relatives, in order to keep him in their subjection. As soon as he came of age, and understood his duties, he gave up these intrigues. When I arrived, he was keeping a lady with great state in a castle. He

visited her from time to time. Afterwards he sent her to the house of her father, who is a knight, and married her. He did the same with another lady, by whom he had had a son. It may be about a year, since he gave up, so at least it is believed, his love-making, as well from fear of God as from fear of scandal in this world, which is thought very much of here. I can say with truth that he esteems himself as much as though he were Lord of the world. He loves war so much that I fear, judging by the provocation he receives, the peace will not last long. War is profitable to him and to the country. . . .

'The country is large. Your Highnesses know that these kingdoms form an island. Judging by what I have read in books and seen on maps, and also by my own experience, I should think that both kingdoms are of equal extent. In the same proportion that England is longer than Scotland, Scotland is wider than England; thus the quantity of land is the same. Neither is the quality very different in the two countries, but the Scotch are not industrious, and the people are poor. They spend all their time in wars, and when there is no war they fight with one another. It must, however, be observed that since the present King succeeded to the throne they do not dare to quarrel so much with one another as formerly, especially since he came of age. They have learnt by experience that he executes the law

without respect to rich or poor. I am told that Scotland has improved so much during his reign that it is worth three times more now than formerly, on account of foreigners having come to the country, and taught them how to live. They have more meat, in great and small animals, than they want, and plenty of wool and hides.

'Spaniards who live in Flanders tell me that the commerce of Scotland is much more considerable now than formerly, and that it is continually increasing.

'It is impossible to describe the immense quantity of fish. The old proverb says already "piscinata Scotia." Great quantities of salmon, herring, and a kind of dried fish, which they call stock fish (stoque fix), are exported. The quantity is so great that it suffices for Italy, France, Flanders, and England. They have so many wild fruits which they eat, that they do not know what to do with them. There are immense flocks of sheep, especially in the savage portions of Scotland. Hides are employed for many purposes. There are all kinds of garden fruits to be found which a cold country can produce. They are very good. Oranges, figs, and other fruits of the same kind are not to be found there. The corn is very good, but they do not produce as much as they might, because they do not cultivate the land. Their method is the following: they plough the land only once, when it has grass on it, which is as high as a

man, then they sow the corn, and cover it by means of a harrow, which makes the land even again. Nothing more is done till they cut the corn. I have seen the straw stand so high after harvest, that it reached to my girdle. Some kind of corn is sown about the Feast of St. John, and is cut in August.

'The people are handsome. They like foreigners so much that they dispute with one another as to who shall have and treat a foreigner in his house. They are vain and ostentatious by nature. They spend all they have to keep up appearances. They are as well dressed as it is possible to be in such a country as that in which they live. They are courageous, strong, quick, and agile. They are envious to excess.

'There are four duchies in the kingdom. Three of them are in the possession of the King; the fourth is held by the eldest brother of the King, who is Duke of Ross and Archbishop of St. Andrews. There are fifteen Earls, not counting the younger brother of the King, who holds two counties. Nine other counties are in possession of the King. Some of the fifteen Earls are great men. I saw two of them come to serve the King in the last war with more than 30,000 men, all picked soldiers and well armed. And yet they did not bring more than one-half of their men. Many others came with five or six thousand followers; some with more, and some with less.

As I have already observed, this army does not cost the King a penny.

'There are two principalities; one of them is the *principatus insularum*, and the other the *principatus Gallividiæ*. Both are held by the King. There are five-and-thirty great barons in the kingdom, without counting the smaller ones.

'There are two archbishoprics and eleven bishoprics, 63 monasteries, which they call abbeys, and many other religious houses, which are endowed with property and rents. The abbeys are very magnificent, the buildings fine, and the revenues great. All of them were founded by Kings. There are seventy seaports. The harbours between the islands are not included in this number, though they are said to be very secure. . . .

'The women are courteous in the extreme. I mention this because they are really honest, though very bold. They are absolute mistresses of their houses, and even of their husbands, in all things concerning the administration of their property, income as well as expenditure. They are very graceful and handsome women. They dress much better than here (England), and especially as regards the head-dress, which is, I think, the handsomest in the world.

'The towns and villages are populous. The houses are good, all built of hewn stone, and provided with excellent doors, glass windows, and a

great number of chimneys. All the furniture that is used in Italy, Spain, and France, is to be found in their dwellings. It has not been bought in modern times only, but inherited from preceding ages.

'The Queens possess, besides their baronies and castles, four country seats, situated in the best portions of the kingdom, each of which is worth about fifteen thousand ducats. The King fitted them up anew only three years ago. There is not more than one fortified town in Scotland, because the Kings do not allow their subjects to fortify them. The town is a very considerable borough, and well armed. The whole soil of Scotland belongs to the King, the landholders being his vassals, or his tenants for life, or for a term of years. They are obliged to serve him forty days at their own expense, every time he calls them out. They are very good soldiers. The King can assemble, within thirty days, 120,000 horse. The soldiers from the islands are not counted in this number. The islands are half a league, one, two, three, or four leagues distant from the mainland. The inhabitants speak the language, and have the habits of the Irish. But there is a good deal of French education in Scotland, and many speak the French language. For all the young gentlemen[1] who have no property go to France, and are well received

[1] '*Fijos dalgo, hidalgo,*' son of somebody, as distinct from the nobodies.

there, and therefore the French are liked. Two or three times I have seen, not the whole army, but one-third of it assembled, and counted more than twelve thousand great and small tents. There is much emulation among them as to who shall be best equipped, and they are very ostentatious, and pride themselves very much in this respect. They have old and heavy artillery of iron. Besides this, they possess modern French guns of metal, which are very good. King Louis gave them to the father of the present King, in payment of what was due to him as co-heir of his sister, the Queen of Scotland.

No. III.

Letter addressed to a Beautiful Woman.[1]

Dear Madam,—As you occupy a very handsome house, and are able to furnish it in a proper manner, will you excuse a friend who is anxious to give you a little advice on the subject?

Your building being formed of the finest materials, it will show in a moment any flaw or spot that may accidentally tarnish the surface. It is of a proper height, a well-proportioned size, and built on a regular plan.

On the top stands a turret, of a globular form, with

[1] From the *Lounger's Common-Place Book*, by Jeremiah Whitaker Newman, Esq., third edition, 1805.

two crystal windows in front. These are so constructed as to command an extensive prospect, and, if always kept clean and bright, will prove of considerable utility, as well as a great ornament to the house. I advise you not to look through them at every object that passes; and above all things, I would have you shut them early at night, as many disagreeable circumstances happen from a neglect in this particular. You may open them as early as you please in a morning.

On each side I observe a small portal to receive company; pray take care they do not always stand open, as you will be crowded with visitors, and perhaps with some you may not like. Let them never be shut against your worthy parents, a sincere friend, or a fellow-creature in distress.

I took notice of one gate in the front, at which all your company goes out. In general I recommend it to you to keep it closely barred, lest, should any bad characters be seen forthcoming, you draw a scandal on your residence. If at any time on necessary occasions, it should be opened, I would lay a strict injunction of watchfulness on the two porters, who stand as sentinels, in liveries of scarlet, just without the ivory palisade.

Some ill-advised people paint the two pannels, just below the windows; an example which I hope you will shun rather than follow.

This part of the edifice is supported by a pillar of Corinthian marble, whose base is ornamented with two semi-globes of alabaster, before which most prudent people draw a curtain of needlework; a practice of late years strangely neglected by some, who, by such conduct, prove themselves grossly deficient in policy, propriety, and good taste.

Beneath is the great hall, in which I understand you have a small closet of exquisite workmanship. This I suppose is the place of your secret retirement, open to none but yourself or some faithful friend. Take care always to keep it clean, and furnished with a small but well-chosen library of the best practical authors. Enter it frequently, especially when you return from public worship or from visiting your friends.

Avoid two opposite errors, which the owners of many houses fall into. Let not the outside hall appear like the shop of an undertaker fitting out a funeral, and crowded with gloomy objects and woful countenances; nor like a lord mayor's coach, bedaubed with gilding and finery. Let it be plain, neat, and always clean, to convince the world that you attend more to utility than ornament.

You must not be surprised to find the tenement you inhabit subject to decay and accident. It is the common effect of time to efface beauty and diminish strength. During the short space you have already lived in it, repairs have been frequently wanted.

These you must consider as plain intimations that the house itself, in a certain number of years, will fall, 'and like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind.'

If I recollect right, you are only a tenant-at-will, and may be turned out, with or without warning; for that was the condition on which it was let to you. Be always ready therefore to go at a moment's notice, and be particularly careful to keep the furniture in the globular turret, and the contents of the little closet, arranged in good order, that you may be able to lay your hand on them without perplexity or confusion.

It will be in vain to attempt to do it, as some have fancied they can, in the bustle and hurry of a sudden removal. A neglect of this important precaution has proved an irreparable injury to thousands.

Excuse this hasty epistle, pardon the liberty I have taken, and impute it to the warm zeal and sincere attachment of Your humble servant.

No. IV.

Two Characteristic Epistles.

I.

When Louis xviii., under the title of Count de Lille, was obliged to quit the Continent after the

Peace of Tilsit, and take refuge in England, he landed at Yarmouth from the Swedish frigate *Freya*, and was rowed ashore by a boat's crew from H.M.S. *Majestic*. Pleased with the attention shown him, the royal exile left fifteen guineas as a guerdon to the men to drink his health. The honest tars, in obedience to an order which had formerly been issued on the subject of taking money from strangers, refused to avail themselves of this munificence. The present case, however, being rather an exceptional one, the men held 'a talk' on the matter, when they resolved to transmit the following letter to Admiral Russell. As a specimen of blunt and unadorned honesty, it is perhaps unrivalled :—

'MAJESTIC, *6th day of November* 1807.

'PLEASE YOUR HONOUR,—We holded a talk about that there £15 that was sent us, and hope no offence, your honour. We don't like to take it, because, as how, we knows fast enuff, that it was the true King of France that went with your honour in the boat, and that he and our own noble King, God bless 'em both, and give every one his right, is good friends now; and besides that, your honour gived an order, long ago, not to take any money from no body, and we never did take none; and Mr. Leneve, that steered your honour and that there King, says he won't have no hand in it, and so does Andrew Young, the proper coxen; and we hopes no offence.

So we all, one and all, begs not to take it at all. So no more at present, from your honour's dutiful servants,

(Signed) 'ANDREW YOUNG, *Coxen;* JAMES MANN, LEWIS BRYAN, JAMES LORD' (and twelve others).[1]

II.

IN Mr. Ballantyne's recent work, *Shifting Winds*, we have a very characteristic effusion, in the shape of a 'hambigoooos' letter, the joint production of Stephen Gaff the fisherman, his wife and little daughter; a letter 'that you can't make head nor tail of nohow; one as'll read a'most as well back'ard as for'ard, an' yet has got a smack o' somethin' mysterious in it, w'ich shows, so to speak, to what pint o' the compass your steerin' for—d'ye see?'

'SUR,—i beggs to stait that ittle bee for your int'rest for to look arter that air gurl cald Eme as was left yoor doar sum dais bak, if yoo doant ittle bee wors for yer, yood giv yer eers an noas too to no wat i nos abowt that gurl, it's not bostin nor yet threttenin i am, no, i'm in Downrite arnist wen i sais as yool bee sorrie if yoo doant do it.

'Now sur, i must cloas, not becaws my papers dun, no nor yet my idees, but becaws a nods as good as a wink—yoo no the rest. wot iv said is troo as gospl.

[1] From *Chambers's Book of Days*, ii. 554.

it's of no use tryn to find owt hoo i am, caws whi—yoo kant, and if yoo cood it wood do yoo no good.

Yoors to comand

THE RITER.'

NO. V.

KATEY'S LETTER.[1]

OCH, girls dear, did you ever hear, I wrote my love a letter,
And altho' he cannot read, sure I thought 'twas all the better.
For why should he be puzzled with hard spelling in the matter,
When the *maning* was so plain, that I love him faithfully!
I love him faithfully, and he knows it, oh! he knows it, without one word from me.

I wrote it and I folded it, and put a seal upon it;
'Twas a seal almost as big as the crown of my best bonnet;
For I would not have the postmaster make his remarks upon it,
As I said *inside* the letter, that I loved him faithfully.
I love him, etc.

[1] By Lady Dufferin.

My heart was full, but when I wrote I dared not put
the half in,
The neighbours know I love him, and they're mighty
fond of chaffing;
So I dared not write his name *outside*, for fear they
would be laughing,
So I wrote, 'From little Kate to one whom she loves
faithfully.'
I love him, etc.

Now, girls, would you believe it, that postman so
consated,
No answer will he bring me, so long as I have
waited;
But maybe—there *mayn't* be one, for the *rason* that
I stated,
That my love can neither read nor write, but he
loves me faithfully.
He loves me faithfully, he loves me faithfully,
And I know where'er my love is that he is
true to me.

No. VI.

'HOUT AWA! IT'S THE 11TH FEBRUARY.'

SINCE the preceding pages passed through the press, I have received two of the quaint letters

referred to at page 189, the first being the one with the corrected date. They are accordingly inserted here as very characteristic illustrations :—

I.

'We're gaun to fash ye, gentlemen, wi' a bit o' your ain gudes, whilk we canna get onybody hereawa to leuk at, it's sae unco saft an' din-dippet like. We shaw'd it to your Mr. D— the other day, whan he ca'd here, an' tal' him we didna ken fat to mak' o't; sae the gude obligin' callant said, ye maun lat it gang back to Manchester agean to us, an' we sall gie't anither bleachin' an' a ca' thro' the callander, whilk will mak' it leuk muckle better.

'Now ye see, gentlemen, we ha'e tint nae time in takin' the hint, the said bit o' gudes bein' sent awa' wi' this present scrapin'. Lat it be unco weel ta'en care o'; an' gin ye like, mak' it up in faulds abqut three-quarters o' an ell lang, as ye dee for ordinar. We ken you'll tak' tent o't, an' we sall be blyth to pay ye for the fash, tho' ye sud aiblins charge us thretty pennies.

'We mak' vera free wi' ye, gentlemen, but ye sall be unco welcome to ca' on us wi' the same freedom whan we can sere ye here. Sae we are, your maist humble servants at comman', DANIEL K—.

'EMBROCH, 10*th Feby.* 1811.

Hout awa, it 's the 11th Feby.

'To Messrs. William G— & Brothers.

'Gif ye canna read our lingo yoursels, ye may let your Dady tak' a glisk o' this letter; aiblins he kens mair about our hamald words than ony o' ye.'

II.

'HOUT awa, Mr. G—, I dinna think ye sud ha'e fash'd to seek yer siller frae us in sic a hurry, whan ye kend fu' weel that we were ay unco ready to dassy down the clink as the gudes came due. At ony rate, I trow ye needna ha'e ta'en the fash to write about siccan a sma' sum, whilk, at the time ye wrote, was only four days owre due. Conscience, it was unco sharp wark, Mester G—; an' ye maun grant we ha'e gude reason to say sae; but fient care, there's nae ill deen after a', deed no.

'Our Willy R— sent yer siller by a bull on Lon'on, on the 9th day o' this sam' on-gaun month, whilk was just sax days ayont the limits o' yer Cr.

'I hope ye gat it, an' wissin' ye may ay cum as weel aff wi' a' yer dettors, I am, Sir, your servant,

'DANIEL K—.

'EDINBROUGH, 12*th Novr.* 1816.

'Deed, Sir, it was yawfu' keen like to draw, and mair like Johny Bull than Sawny.'

Two of the 'Messrs. G—,' to whom the first of these letters is addressed, were the prototypes of the 'Brothers Cheeryble' in *Nicholas Nickleby*.

No. VII.

Do You Burn your Letters yet?[1]

Mr. Epicurus Rotundus improves New Year's Eve.

Do I burn my letters yet? Not half as often as I ought to do. But here is New Year's Eve, and Mrs. Epicurus and the family have departed to behold 'Cinderella,' and I am not to fetch them home, and here is a good cigar, and there is a good fire. Let me, in all tranquillity, overhaul the contents of my letter drawer. I paid my fire-assurance on Wednesday, so if any accident happens, I shall get a new carpet and table. Who comes first? Billy Bowker —has an urgent need for £15. Never knew Billy without the need—I know I didn't send it—in he goes. Mrs. Macjericho—could I get her a private box for Fechter? That woman has £3000 a year, and doesn't give champagne—forget how I evaded, but I am sure she didn't see Fechter *gratis, viâ* hers truly, E. R. The next, Henry Wubber. Who in the name of Acheron is he?—wants my honoured autograph, as that of one whom he has studied and loved from his youth up, and spells my name wrong. Don't think I sent it, yet his name was a tempting rhyme to blubber. What a pretty hand—have I been discreet in leaving this note in an open drawer?—yes,

[1] From *Punch*.

quite. A young lady wishes for my photograph and some original verses, and doesn't even trust me with her initials. I am to write to Blue Belle, Post Office, Shrewsbury. *Ventrebleu!* Mademoiselle Blue Belle, were we not worthy of a lady's confidence? Frank Clotton—sends me a brace of pheasants. I remember, they were bad, and Mrs. Epicurus had to pay three-and-ninepence carriage, and nobody had any change, and it was ten at night and rainy, altogether disagreeable—Frank should frank his game, and send it sweet, besides—well reminded—he has got my Macaulay, and dare say thinks I mean to let him keep it. I abuse and disabuse Cloten (as we call him) *per* first post. Mr. Poppifer Yawney—has the pleasure to send pamphlet on the 'True Equivalent of Fictitious Currency,' and hopes that in any or all of the numerous publications with which I have influence—wants to be puffed against the next election—saw his pamphlet—in the waste basket first. There's a blaze, wo—ho! Mrs. Montgomery Tadd—eh, by Jove! Mrs. Tadd I've acted bad and likewise rude, the which is sad. Never opened that woman's packet of manuscript novels, which she asked me to read, revise, and get published, and what makes it all the worse, I never heard of her before in all my life. Wonder where it is. Whose fault shall I say it was? Eight months. Think I'll say nothing about it—perhaps she's dead. Another lady. Wife of the

Reverend Timothy Tode asks for subscription towards building her adored husband a new house amid a flock where his labours are so blessed—writes without his knowledge—highly improper in a wife—am I sure I felt so at the time, and did not help Timothy? Mr. Cramper, bootmaker, thinks I must have forgotten that his bill for the Alpine boots has been sent in, and having a large account to make up on Tuesday—why is it always Tuesday? But I paid him, and hope I have not lost the receipt, for the boots were not worth paying for once, let alone twice. See to this. H. A. P. Who's that? Nine sides. Ah, I ought to have burned this. Harry Pepperpot, with a statement why he cannot, in justice to himself and his comforts, live with his wife any longer, and why I ought to go and explain that little circumstance to her. Since that, he has made it up with Mrs. Pepperpot and quarrelled with me. Good mind to re-enclose him the letter—but into the fire with it. Mrs. Clarrup Jiggles—asks me to recommend a good school for her boy, where his beautiful genius will not be snubbed—she is sure he is a genius, for he is fifteen, and cannot learn arithmetic. Rather think I enclosed her the last report of the Earlswood Asylum—ought to have. Here's a scrawl. Will I second Young Blatant M'Borum at the Hippopotamus Club? How did I get out of that? How the deuce did I get out of that? What a rich mind I must have, to have been

able to imagine circumstances that prevented me, and to have forgotten what they were! Perhaps I said it was against the rules for a man with red whiskers to second a man with black. I must have told some awful parable. I know I helped to black-ball him. The Secretary of the Aborigines Institute, Ballywhobble, west of Ireland—Institute in debt, would my well-known philanthropy induce me to come over in the winter, and give them a gratis lecture, as full of humour as possible? Could not offer me a bed, but there was a tolerable commercial inn. Didn't go, which explains why my brother's poems were so hideously abused in the *Connemara Howler*. Miss Matilda Vernonby (dessay her name's Viggins)—would like a set of my works, with autograph presentation inscription by their gifted author (that's me), and sends her photograph. Thirty-six, if an hour. Think I told her they were out of print. A long letter, in a small, gentlemanly hand. No right to intrude, but feels certain that a narrative of his troubles will induce me to extend assistance. I felt quite certain that it wouldn't, the less that I had two previous letters from the same troubled party, with different signatures, and greatly varied narratives. I relieved him as a paralysed doctor, and again as an artist who had lost his sight, but I could not feel for him a third time, when he appeared as a clergyman who had been ruined by a fugitive banker. Keep

this letter against his fourth Avatar. This is a bold hand—the writer is no beggar. Yes, he is, an impudent beggar. Signs himself Aristarchus, and says that he has read my writings with a disgust he cannot describe (who asked him?), and that he has no doubt that in my black heart I find echoes of all the sentiments of my objectionable characters. Very well, that's no business of his'n. A pink note. Ah! that was a sell, a cruel sell. The handwriting so pretty, and all so dainty, and I thought—of course if it had been so I should have answered her in a fatherly manner, and sent her 'Dr. Gregory's Legacy to his Daughters'—but it was an invitation to examine the enclosed list of prices of coals at the Slaterubble Colliery. 'Hang her, foul collier!' Such tricks, however, defeat themselves, for I would sooner burn blue-books and missionary reports all the evening than coals advertised so treacherously. Hm! wheels.

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